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ABSTRACT

This guide outlines the methods for organizing and using vocational technical advisory committees in secondary schools in Massachusetts. It is intended to be used as the basis for school staff training to be conducted by personnel at the State Department of Education's Regional Education Centers. The guide provides illustrations and exhibits of effective practices that exist in the state and stresses three necessary components of the use of advisory committees: (1) the involvement of school staff throughout the process; (2) written response by the school to the committee's recommendations; and (3) independent functioning of the committee. The guide is organized in seven sections. The first two sections state the law and regulations regarding the use of advisory committees and provide a mission statement. The third section explains the role of advisory committees, while the next section outlines the structural features of advisory committees. How to recruit advisory committee members is the topic of the next section, followed by a section on organizing advisory committee meetings. The final section focuses on evaluation of committee effectiveness and correcting problems. Extensive exhibits illustrate the concepts discussed in the guide. The appendix provides a survey form for members or former members of vocational advisory committees. (KC)

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Vocational Technical Advisory Committees

A GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE UTILIZATION

PREPARED FOR

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Department of Education
Division of Occupational Education

PREPARED BY

Education Development Center, Inc.
Newton, Massachusetts

March 1987

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Department of Education

1385 Hancock Street, Quincy, Massachusetts 02169

February 2, 1987

Dear Reader:

The Division of Occupational Education is pleased to present Vocational-Technical Advisory Committees: A Guide to Effective Utilization. This publication will be the basis for school staff training to be conducted by personnel at the department's Regional Education Centers.

Vocational advisory committees are intended to serve a vital function in the planning, operation, and evaluation of vocational education programs. The Chapter 74 Regulations Governing Vocational Education state some specific responsibilities of advisory committees and it is important to utilize these occupational and community representatives to the maximum extent possible.

The division conducted an extensive mail survey of advisory committee members in 1985. The survey results indicated a need to revitalize these committees in many school and to further clarify the respective roles of teachers, administrators, school committee members, and advisory committee members in this critical element of the Chapter 74 program approval factors.

This guide provides illustrations and exhibits of effective practices that exist in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. I do wish to emphasize three important practices that are necessary for the effective utilization of advisory committees in vocational education:

1. The involvement of school staff throughout the process is essential. Teachers, especially department heads, need to be involved with their program advisory committee throughout the year. Administrators must play an active role in the selection of committee members and in communication with both program and general advisory committees. School committee members must be informed of the advisory committee recommendations and at least once each year must meet directly with the general advisory committee during a regularly scheduled school committee meeting.

2. Each year the school's administration should provide a written response to each of the recommendations of the general and program advisory committees.

3. Each advisory committee should function in a manner that emphasizes its independence from the school staff. As an example, each committee should elect a chairperson from its membership and that individual should run the meetings with any required assistance from school staff (teachers and administrators). At the same time, the school staff should support the advisory committee by working with the chairperson to facilitate the meetings and by providing information to the committee.

This guide was developed with the considerable assistance of a number of vocational-technical schools in Massachusetts that received recognition for exemplary practices in the operation of their advisory committees. I commend the work of those schools and I look forward to a renewed commitment to the full utilization of these resources.

Sincerely,

David F. Cronin
Associate Commissioner
Division of Occupational Education

DFC/mtk

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Many thanks are extended to the members of the project advisory board. Their careful review and creative suggestions greatly improved each draft of the guide:

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The Division of Occupational Education, Massachusetts Department of Education, deserves special mention for underscoring the importance of advisory committees in vocational-technical education and sharing the results of their advisory committee research, which provided the foundation for this project. Thanks are also extended to John P. McDonagh, director of the division's Bureau of Research, Planning and Evaluation and project monitor. His leadership in promoting the work of advisory committees and his commitment to the development of a truly useful guide enabled us to focus on key issues and practical approaches.

In preparing this guide, project staff visited vocational-technical schools and programs throughout Massachusetts. Many school staff and advisory board members at the sites listed below took time from their busy schedules to provide detailed and valuable information. They were extremely generous in describing effective strategies, offering their ideas, and relating program experiences. Also acknowledged with appreciation are the numerous materials – forms, protocols, guidelines, letters – this group enthusiastically shared. Their work, sometimes in adapted form, has been incorporated into the guide.

FIELD SITES

Assabet Valley Regional Vocational Technical School, Marlboro

Attleboro Public Schools

Blue Hills Regional Vocational-Technical School, Canton

Boston Public Schools

Cape Cod Regional Vocational-Technical School, Harwich

Chicopee Public Schools

Dean Vocational-Technical High School, Holyoke

Greater Lowell Regional Vocational-Technical School, Tyngsboro

King Philip Regional High School, Wrentham

Minuteman Regional Vocational-Technical School, Lexington

Northampton-Smith Vocational and Agricultural School, Northampton

Peabody Public Schools

Pittsfield Public Schools

South Shore Regional Vocational Technical School, Hanover

Worcester Industrial-Technical Institute

In addition, the quotations that appear throughout this guide were taken from the advisory committee survey conducted by the Division of Occupational Education. Committee members expressed, in their own words, the importance of their committees and the effective ways in which they operate.

We hope this guide will inspire vocational educators and advisory committee members to continue working together for the advancement of vocational-technical education.

The Law and Chapter 74 Regulations

MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAW

CH. 74, S.6. ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Local and district trustees for vocational education, administering independent distributive occupations, industrial, agricultural, vocational home economics and allied health occupations schools shall, under a scheme approved by the commissioner under the direction of the state board, appoint advisory committees composed of representatives of local trades, industries and occupations, which shall consult with and advise the trustees or other officials managing and supervising such schools. Amended by St.1938, c.446, s.5; St.1952, c.630, s.5; St.1957, c.599, s.4; St.1978, c.475, s.3.

CHAPTER 74 REGULATIONS (extract)
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DIVISION OF OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

4.00 APPROVAL CRITERIA

In reviewing applications for G.L. c.74 program approval, the Commissioner shall evaluate the proposed program with respect to the following criteria.

4.01 ORGANIZATION

4.01.1 Each school desiring to obtain approval for a G.L. c.74 vocational program shall demonstrate that it has been planned in consultation with the following advisory committees.

A. Program Advisory Committee

Each school committee or board of trustees shall appoint a Program Advisory Committee for each program area under its control. Such Program Advisory Committee shall consist of representatives of local business and industry related to the program, organized labor, parents and students; provided however, that no member of the school committee, board of trustees or other school official shall serve thereon. Such Program Advisory Committee shall meet at least semi-annually. It shall be the responsibility of the Program Advisory Committee to advise, assist and support the department head, program manager, guidance personnel and other school officials in order to improve planning, operation and evaluation in its program area. Such advice shall be based on adequate and timely information as to manpower and job development demands or job market trends, technological developments, training alternatives and other factors affecting the quality of the program.

The program manager and/or department head in its program area may serve as secretary to the Program Advisory Committee.

B. General Advisory Committee

Each school committee or board of trustees shall appoint a general advisory committee for all vocational programs under its control. Such General Advisory Committee shall include, but not be limited to, chairpersons of the program advisory committees. Such General Advisory Committee shall meet at least semi-annually, provided that one such meeting is with the school committee or board of trustees. It shall be the responsibility of the General Advisory Committee to advise the school committee or board of trustees, based on adequate and timely information, as to the planning, operation and evaluation of vocational instruction provided by programs under its control.

The chief administrative officer of the school committee or board of trustees may act as secretary to the General Advisory Committee.

Chapter 74 Regulations Governing Vocational Education were adopted by the Massachusetts Board of Education on June 28, 1977 and became effective on September 1, 1977.

NOTE: Any changes in the regulations will be available from the Massachusetts Department of Education, Division of Occupational Education.

Mission Statement

"The only thing that is constant in this world is change."

The old saying is perhaps nowhere more applicable than in the world of work. How many of us would have known, fifty years ago, that in the 1980s there would be a great demand for technicians to repair personal computers and videocassette recorders?

Business and industry have been shaken by the explosion of new technology. Many jobs simply are not done the way they were years ago. And scientific and technological advances will continue to have a profound impact on the labor market.

Schools with vocational-technical programs are at the cutting edge of change. On the one hand, they are committed to maintaining high standards while preparing students with the skills they need to compete for jobs and further education. On the other hand, they are often strapped by limited resources and faced with changing work environments. How can schools keep pace with the rapid tempo of change in the work world and maintain their standards of excellence in education?

One answer is to infuse educators with the collective wisdom that is available in the private sector. The primary avenue for tapping this knowledge and expertise is the effective utilization of vocational-technical advisory committees. Advisory committees representing business and industry, labor, parents, and students serve as a forum for integrating and translating information from the work world into practical methods for education.

Effective advisory committees can benefit everyone involved. Administrators receive much-needed assistance. Teachers learn to incorporate technological advances into the curriculum. Potential employers enjoy a more highly skilled work force. And, of course, the bottom line: vocational-technical students are better prepared to enter the work world and to advance in their future.

Advisory committees are making significant contributions to the quality of vocational-technical education in Massachusetts:

- **General program planning.** Advisory committees help schools measure trends in the local labor market. They identify new programs that are needed as well as programs that have become obsolete. They help schools set priorities for allocating their limited resources.
- **Curriculum and instruction advisement.** Advisory committees identify new or developing fields in certain occupations, visit shops to demonstrate specialized skills, and validate tasks to help students become more competitive.

My belief in vocational-technical education is very strong. In fact, I think a student who does not go on to college and has no vocational-technical training is lost in today's job market.

- **Equipment and facilities advisement.** The foresight and generosity of advisory committees have kept Massachusetts vocational-technical programs in the vanguard of new technology in many occupations. On a statewide basis, advisors have donated millions of dollars worth of industrial equipment and supplies to vocational-technical schools.
- **Student recruitment, career guidance, and placement services.** Advisors employ vocational-technical students as co-op placements and as graduates, and they direct students to other potential employers. Advisors often serve as judges for student organization competitions, and they give valuable prizes to top graduates.
- **Professional development.** Advisors help instructors stay current with technology. Some offer summer jobs to teachers; others sponsor inservice workshops.
- **Community public relations.** Advisory committees represent the school among the business community. They are often the school's most influential advocate with the school committee, and their advice is often the most effective way to institute change.
- **Program evaluation.** Advisory committees work with administrators to develop criteria for determining when vocational-technical programs should be scaled down or terminated. They also make suggestions for modifying exploratory programs to attract top-quality students.

Key to the success of any vocational-technical advisory committee is *commitment* — not only of the committee members themselves, but also of the school administrators who set the tone for cooperative ventures, and above all, of the teachers, whose mission it is to prepare students to enter the work force.

In 1985, the Division of Occupational Education of the Massachusetts State Department of Education surveyed more than 3,000 individuals who were identified as members of vocational-technical advisory committees. The survey revealed great variation in the activities of advisory committees across the Commonwealth. Many were not being used effectively, and a number of survey respondents asked for help in defining their roles. Many were providing exemplary service to vocational-technical schools and programs.

This manual is geared not only to the school administrators and personnel who are responsible for maintaining advisory committees under the mandate of Chapter 74, but also to advisory committee members who are interested in improving their work for vocational-technical schools. The information contained in the manual was drawn largely from Massachusetts schools that were contacted, through personal visits and telephone calls, to learn from their experiences. Other published resources on vocational-technical advisory committees were also consulted.

The purpose of this manual is to provoke some serious thought toward encouraging greater and more effective use of advisory committees. Each section of the manual offers a step-by-step, "how to do it" approach:

- *"What Do Advisory Committees Do?"* offers a sampling of the many activities that advisory committees in Massachusetts have undertaken.
- *"Structural Features of Advisory Committees"* describes the context in which program and general advisory committees operate — that is, the link between the community and the schools.

- *"Recruiting Your Advisory Committee Members"* offers some pointers on recruiting good advisors: sources, techniques of recruiting and recognizing active members, issues of size of the committee, and term of service.
- *"Organizing Advisory Committee Meetings"* presents some tools for organizing effective advisory committee meetings: when to schedule them, who to invite and how to run a productive meeting.
- The manual concludes with *"Evaluating Committee Effectiveness"* — tips for periodic evaluations of the effectiveness of vocational-technical advisory committees.

Throughout the manual are sample materials — forms, letters, and checklists — that you may wish to adapt for your own use. They are intended to ease the way toward establishing advisory committes that "work." It is our hope that readers will learn from the experiences of their counterparts throughout the Commonwealth to upgrade and enrich their own advisory committees.

I am proud of the system we have here. The instructors and school officials ask us a lot of questions to see if we can help the students in any way we see fit. I feel that the advisory committee has helped the students in many ways, and they have shown their appreciation by thanking us personally when they see us at meetings. I can honestly say that the vocational-technical schools are the best thing that has happened in our community in a long while.

What Do Advisory Committees Do?

According to Chapter 74 Regulations, it is the mission of program advisory committees to: ***advise, assist and support the department head, program manager, guidance personnel and other school officials in order to improve planning, operation and evaluation [of the] program area.***

In general, advisory committees exist to keep vocational-technical education in tune with occupational trends. They do this in a variety of ways:

- by advising on equipment and facility needs;
- by advising on curriculum and instructional methods;
- by helping to recruit, guide, and advise vocational-technical students;
- by advocating for vocational-technical education with industry and the community; and
- by helping administrators to plan and evaluate vocational-technical programs.

My committee has been very involved with the education of the students: reviewing the courses; suggesting textbooks, jobs, and equipment that would best prepare the students for the jobs in industry in our area. The staff has been very receptive and expects us to help improve the program.

This chapter offers a "smorgasbord" of activities that might be undertaken by program and general advisory committees for vocational-technical education. The examples provided are actual accomplishments of advisory committees in Massachusetts. Some are the result of years of discussion and preparation by the advisory committee, working with school personnel; others required only a single meeting and recommendation to school administrators or the school committee. Some are small-scale changes that improve a single aspect of a vocational-technical program; others are dramatic alterations that may affect the overall operation of the school.

The important point is that the critical eyes, creative imaginations, and combined strength of a good advisory committee can really make things happen. The examples provided in this chapter are intended simply to generate ideas for ways to use your advisory committees for greatest benefit to your school.

provide advice on new technology

Advisory committees review existing equipment, facilities, and resources. The tour of the shop is a highlight of the program advisory committee meeting. Advisors generally consider how closely the school's equipment matches the equipment used in industry: What is obsolete? What is still needed? Is the shop adequately stocked? Are there sufficient materials for all students in the program? The shop tour may generate a series of grant applications and donations that can turn a shop around in relatively short order.

The physical layout of the shop may also be a target for advisor comment.

In at least two schools, advisory committees recommended moving the auto-body instructor's desk to a raised platform to give the teacher a better view of the entire shop area.

Advisors also consider safety issues, applying their own safety standards (or those promulgated by the industry, or by state or federal agencies) to the school's shop area.

In a number of schools, advisors have recommended installing spray booths to maintain air-quality standards in auto-body shops.

One program advisor offered the use of company facilities to test the oil in a school's machine shop for PCBs.

Advisory committees recommend new equipment. Advisors help schools get the best equipment for their needs at reasonable cost. Not only might they suggest purchasing a generic type of equipment—for example, Computer-Assisted Design (CAD) systems for drafting programs or Computerized Numerical Control (CNC) for machine shops—but they often help the instructional staff select from the different products and models available. Advisors may attend several ad hoc meetings to review sales brochures, observe vendors' demonstrations, and compare quotes.

Advisory committee members in one school are researching the comparative advantages of different configurations of computer equipment for a new course in desktop publishing.

One school obtained eight CNC stations instead of three for its machine shop when advisors recommended purchasing special training modules rather than full-scale industrial equipment.

Advisors in one school rejected all proposals that were submitted for a new CAD system, and reissued the solicitation with new requirements. As a result, the school acquired a far more powerful system at comparable cost.

Vocational-technical administrators in Massachusetts generally concur that some demonstration of advisory committee support is necessary to procure funds for new equipment. Some schools require that program advisors sign off on all grant applications or purchase requisitions; others simply attach minutes of the committees' meetings confirming the need for new equipment. Advisors may also be asked to attend school committee meetings to support the school's request for funds.

Advisory committees donate materials, equipment, and services to vocational-technical programs. If the advisors themselves cannot supply a certain item, they may direct the school to someone who can. Sometimes advisors impose upon their colleagues to donate the needed supplies. Regardless of the source, schools get a better-stocked shop, and the donor businesses may get a welcome tax benefit.

One marine technology program received in donations $40,000 of sandpaper, seven engines, and five boats.

Some dental assistant students learn theory in school and practice their skills in laboratory facilities donated by advisory committee members.

Advisory committees help schools maintain their libraries of visual aids, magazines, and books. Advisors have provided schools with updated parts catalogs and with published regulations (e.g., for hazardous waste disposal). With the advent of inexpensive videotape equipment, advisors have contributed to comprehensive occupational libraries in the schools.

Car dealers have loaned manufacturers' training videos to automotive technology shops; carpentry businesses have donated videos that demonstrate highly specialized woodworking techniques.

help update and refine the curriculum

Advisory committees help to develop educational objectives. Sometimes an outside perspective offers new insights on programs that may seem stagnant or unable to keep pace with industry trends. Fresh ideas can help vocational-technical administrators and instructors to place their programs in context and develop new approaches that are more in tune with contemporary expectations.

Advisory committees help to validate task/competency listings for an occupation. These listings provide the foundation for the development of a competency-based vocational-technical program curriculum.

Electronics programs attract students who are interested in repair work as well as students who aspire to be engineers. Drafting programs attract students who want to be machine draftspersons as well as students who want to be architects. Advisors can help vocational-technical administrators decide whether to offer a two-track program, limit enrollment to one or the other type of student, or otherwise solve this dilemma.

One school reconsidered its approach to teaching computer-assisted drafting when the program advisory committee identified what students needed to know. They added a third year to the program to incorporate CAD/CAM while retaining their excellent drafting program.

We seem to get a lot of ideas out in the open that are used by the teachers in their classes and their advisements. The committee serves to provide the instructors with a direct link to the industry environment they are teaching.

Advisory committees share their expertise on new and developing areas. Change is a constant in the world of vocational-technical education, and advisors can help schools keep pace with the times. They suggest new program areas — such as wastewater treatment or medical office management. And they identify emerging trends in traditional areas — unibody auto construction, computer-assisted drafting, short-order food preparation.

To help a school expand its electronics program, one advisory committee researched local trends in robotics and computer/VCR repair. As a result of the advisory committee's work, the school focused its expansion efforts on computer and video equipment repair.

Advisory committees review, evaluate, and advise on the technical content of course materials. Schools have found advisors' input to be helpful in determining whether texts need to be updated or supplemented. Although advisors generally do not select course materials, they may identify occupation-related manuals or catalogs, for example, that are used in their own shops and would be equally applicable for vocational-technical training shops.

One distributive education advisory committee observed that the texts in use were outdated. The teacher pre-selected three new texts and asked the advisors to critique them in view of their applicability to actual retailing practice.

Members of a program advisory committee in licensed practical nursing surveyed local hospitals to ascertain which procedures were assigned to LPNs. Their findings were used to enrich the curriculum.

Advisory committees advise on the methods of instruction most appropriate for course content. Vocational-technical instructors welcome suggestions that help to hold student interest while advancing the concepts and skills required in the course. Although few advisors have been trained to be teachers, many are in a position to offer unique perspectives from on-the-job training that occurs in their business.

The advisory committee for one school's machine shop met every three weeks one summer to help the school design a project-oriented course. They worked closely with the teachers to analyze the desired skill levels for a competency-based approach to instruction.

When a student advisor commented that instructional time in the quantity food occupations program seemed monotonous, the advisory committee recommended changing the stations more often.

The advisory committee at one school helped to procure a federal grant supporting an aide to work specifically with the special-needs students.

Advisory committees help schools to identify courses needed to meet entry-level job requirements. Occupations that are unionized or regulated by the state or industry associations place special emphasis on knowledge of theory and skills required to enter the work force. Advisors representing these occupations can help vocational-technical schools to tailor their programs to ensure that graduates are prepared. Advisory committees may also suggest ways for schools to use existing facilities and personnel to retrain displaced workers for new occupations.

Advisory committees advise on the extent to which basic skills and work attitudes should be taught. Advisors in the technical shops (e.g., machine shop, electronics, and drafting), for example, have pointed to the need for better preparation in math and computer skills. Some advisors see a need for improved communication skills. And many advisors, across all program areas, pay attention to the importance of good work attitudes.*

*Recent research in Massachusetts indicates a very high level of satisfaction on the part of employers for the work habits and work attitudes of Chapter 74 program completers.

Because a number of advisory committee members expressed dissatisfaction with the students' work habits, one distributive education teacher instituted a rating chart to record each student's attendance, punctuality, and grades. These charts are now used when selecting students for co-op placements.

Advisory committee members serve as, or arrange for, guest speakers or substitute teachers. Some advisors have arranged for manufacturers to take their displays to the schools. One drafting advisor sponsors special workshops for students on the use of drafting film. A chef advisor demonstrates ice sculpture.

One school's general advisory committee noted that vocational-technical programs sometimes experienced difficulty in finding quality substitute teachers. The committee's research yielded a resource list for the school to consult when substitutes are needed.

Advisory committees bring special projects to the school. Many schools have initiated successful house-building projects, thanks largely to input from several advisory committees: electrical, plumbing, and carpentry. Advisors to auto-body repair shops locate salvage vehicles for students to work on. Carpentry advisory committees devise blueprint projects for students and critique the results. Machine shop committees likewise initiate competitive projects for students and award prizes to the winners.

The drafting advisory committee at one school asked students to submit drawings for a special project. One drawing, to be selected by the advisory committee, was then to be given to the machine shop students to actually make the tool.

Merchandising students at one school wanted to do a marketing survey for the school store. Two advisory committee members helped to develop a survey instrument and analyze the results. One finding of the survey was that customers preferred to use credit cards for purchases at the store.

Advisory committees contribute to the professional development of instructional staff. By underwriting teachers' memberships in industry and trade associations, advisory committees help teachers gain access to technology updates and entree to colleagues in the field. The efforts of advisors enable teachers to attend conferences or workshops to upgrade their skills and sometimes advisors sponsor their own tours and work-

shops for teachers. Moreover, advisors often provide summer employment for teachers to introduce them to technology used in the field and to help sharpen their skills.

Advisors for a graphic arts program instructed teachers in the use of mechanized film processing and a color lab for color separation. They also helped the school obtain more than $250,000 worth of sophisticated equipment, including a color scanner.

---

assist in recruiting and placing students

Advisory committees help "sell" vocational-technical education to students. Perhaps one of the most important functions of a program advisor is serving as a role model for students who are considering entering the occupation. This function is most evident when recruiting students for nontraditional occupations and when recruiting special-needs students or academically disadvantaged students.

Advisors frequently speak at assemblies for eighth-graders to introduce them to vocational-technical education and work opportunities. They also give presentations for exploratory classes. Some schools have asked their advisors to publicize employment potential in slide or film presentations developed for recruitment purposes.

Advisory committees arrange for occupationally related field trips and other activities. Advisors often open their plants for class tours or observations of the actual operation of a business. Sometimes they allow brief hands-on demonstrations to give students a glimpse of how it would be to do this kind of work.

One program advisor has arranged for two drafting students to spend half a day each week "shadowing" a draftsperson or designer at the large graphics firm where the advisor works.

Advisory committees inform the school of opportunities to place students in full- or part-time jobs or co-op positions. Vocational-technical students welcome the chance to try out their new skills and make some money while still in school; when they graduate, they want jobs related to their training. Advisors are aware of job openings, both in their own shops and in those of their colleagues, and can pass this information on to the school's instructional and placement staff. They can also advise teachers and students of the pay scale to expect upon graduation.

One union member of an advisory committee sees to it that at least one student from the school gets an electrician's apprenticeship position each year.

Advisory committees inform employers of the availability of trained vocational-technical students. People with no direct link to vocational-technical schools are often totally unaware of the talent that may be available. Helping to publicize the school in this way may, in turn, generate donations and other forms of support and, of course, enlarge the membership of advisory committees.

Advisory committees support student vocational-technical organizations (such as DECA and VICA). Advisors serve as judges for competitions and often donate scholarships, awards, or prizes to the top students. Winning a complete tool set can be a valuable incentive for vocational-technical students looking for their first job after graduation.

Advisory committees review the school's career guidance policies and activities. Advisors help vocational-technical personnel assess the larger picture of employment opportunities in their community—whether for traditional occupations, special populations, or emerging occupational areas.

General advisory committee members at one school observed that some students in summer jobs often found working so lucrative that they chose not to return to school to finish their program. This finding initiated a study of ways to strengthen the co-op program so that students could "earn while they learn."

Another general advisory committee recommended expanding the number of occupational areas in the exploratory program from six to nine.

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generate positive public relations

Advisory committees help acquaint the community with the needs of vocational-technical education. Advisors can be the school's most effective spokespersons with political groups—not only the school committee, but planning boards as well. The views of prominent business leaders tend to carry considerable weight with these policymakers.

One school, whose agricultural program had thrived over many years, was threatened by the city's plan to take over the land for development. Through the combined efforts of the general advisory committee, the school was able to keep its land and its agricultural program.

Advisors speak to trade or community organizations about their work with vocational-technical programs. Sometimes they place articles in their company or trade newsletters. These public relations activities, in turn, may initiate stories in local print and broadcast media that reflect favorably on both the school and the advisors themselves.

Advisory committees have arranged for student exhibits at local shopping malls, and they have themselves appeared to speak about the relationship between vocational-technical schools and the private sector.

Advisory committees seek legislative support for vocational-technical programs. Advisors who are community leaders may wield clout with state or federal legislators, and they may be able to speak on behalf of the needs of vocational-technical education generally, or of particular schools.

An advertising executive who is a member of one school's merchandising advisory committee initiated a letter campaign to state legislators to protest funding cutbacks in vocational-technical education.

assist with program planning and evaluation

Advisory committees help vocational-technical schools plan and implement new programs. As noted above, advisors sometimes generate ideas for new vocational-technical programs. In addition, advisors can also be closely involved in the actual planning and implementation of those programs.

Several general advisory committee members served as a Blue Ribbon Commission to assess the city's need for a new vocational-technical school. Now that the city has agreed to build a new school, advisory committee members are working with instructors to lay out their shops and identify equipment needs.

Advisory committees help schools set priorities for budgetary expenditures. When resources are limited, advisors help vocational-technical administrators use their available resources to maximum advantage. Many schools in Massachusetts relied heavily on the recommendations of their advisors, for example, when Proposition 2½ forced painful decisions about cutting back on or eliminating programs.

Advisory committees advise schools on trends in the local job market. Advisors from business and industry are in an ideal position to foresee where their own industries are headed and how advances in technology will affect the labor market. Vocational-technical programs can thus capitalize on advisors' insights and knowledge by preparing for shifts in demand for certain types of workers.

One school initiated an assembly program targeted to special-needs students, based on an advisor's observation of the great need for trained and reliable assemblers.

Advisory committees help schools evaluate the quality of their vocational-technical programs. Assessing how well vocational-technical programs are preparing students to enter the job market can take several forms with advisors assisting in various ways. For example, schools or private contractors may undertake follow-up surveys of graduates and employers to ascertain what proportion of students remain in their field upon graduation, and to measure employer satisfaction with the quality of training. Often advisors assist with these surveys by suggesting additional questions, proposing ways to encourage cooperation with employers, or reviewing survey results and recommending program changes accordingly.

At several schools, advisors have been assessing whether the names of programs actually fit the course content. For example, Auto Body Repair might be more aptly described as Vehicle Collision Technology, since students are prepared to work on vehicles other than cars. One advisory committee is considering alternative names for the drafting program because the admissions directors of technical colleges have expressed surprise at the program's level of sophistication.

Some advisors have suggested close monitoring of co-op placements to identify and close any gaps between the school's training and the needs of employers; with early detection of problems, a school can thus modify a program quickly to benefit current enrollees. And still other advisors assist by serving as on-site evaluators for Chapter 74 evaluations conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Education.

Structural Features of Advisory Committees

Chapter 74 Regulations portray a systematic relationship between advisory committees, schools, and school committees. Exhibit 1 illustrates this relationship, showing how program and general advisory committees serve to link the school with the larger community.

As the exhibit shows, advisory committee membership is drawn from the community. Instructional staff and other school personnel should act as support staff and liaisons to advisory committees; they are not voting members. Reports and recommendations that emerge from the committees' work are directed to school administrators (who represent state and local education policies) and to the school committee (which represents the concerns of the community).

The arrows in the exhibit depict the two-way dialogue between advisory committees, school personnel, and the school committee. As program and general advisory committees submit their recommendations to school administrators and the school committee, so should the latter report back to advisory committees on their decisions. The most effective use of advisory committees grows from free-flowing, honest communications among all participants in the system.

Our committee is interested in both the overall school goal and the aims of our segment of industry. The high caliber of instructors has promoted a work-together approach to problem solving and program development.

Although this manual is devoted to the work of program and general advisory committees for vocational-technical programs, it is important to note that there are other avenues for private sector involvement in local education. Private Industry Councils (PICs) and School Improvement Councils are two examples of ongoing efforts to involve the larger community in some aspects of their local schools. Individuals who serve on vocational-technical advisory committees may also participate in these or other activities that benefit the school. It may be helpful for schools to develop their own organizational charts or other graphic presentations of the various links between their schools and the community-at-large.

This chapter discusses the ways in which program and general advisory committees are organized and explains the roles of the key individuals involved. It also describes the interactions between advisory committees and other components of the school and community environment.

roles and responsibilities of advisory committees

A program advisory committee must be established for each Chapter 74 vocational-technical program within the school. As required by Chapter 74 Regulations, membership is drawn from the community: representatives of business, industry, labor, student(s), and parent(s). It is recommended that the student and parent members be representative of students enrolled in the program. The stated purpose of a program advisory committee is to: ***advise, assist and support the department head, program manager, guidance personnel and other school officials in order to improve planning, operation and evaluation in its program area.***

Each school must also establish a general advisory committee to consist of (but not be limited to) the chairpersons of the program advisory committees. The stated purpose of the general advisory committee is to: ***advise the school committee or board of trustees... [on] the planning, operation and evaluation of vocational instruction provided by programs.***

Chapter 74 Regulations clearly perceive advisory committees as an integral force in shaping vocational-technical programs to meet the needs of the work force and to keep pace with the rapid growth of modern technology. The regulations also offer a few guidelines for structuring these committees. This manual uses the Chapter 74 Regulations as the basis for expanded guidelines.

THE CHAIRPERSON

Each program and general advisory committee must elect or appoint a chairperson from its membership. It is this person's responsibility to work with the school facilitator to develop agendas and manage meetings.

Program advisory committe chairs are also members of the school's general advisory committee. As such, they convey the concerns or recommendations of the program advisory committee to the larger entity, and in turn provide feedback on the results of general advisory committee discussions.

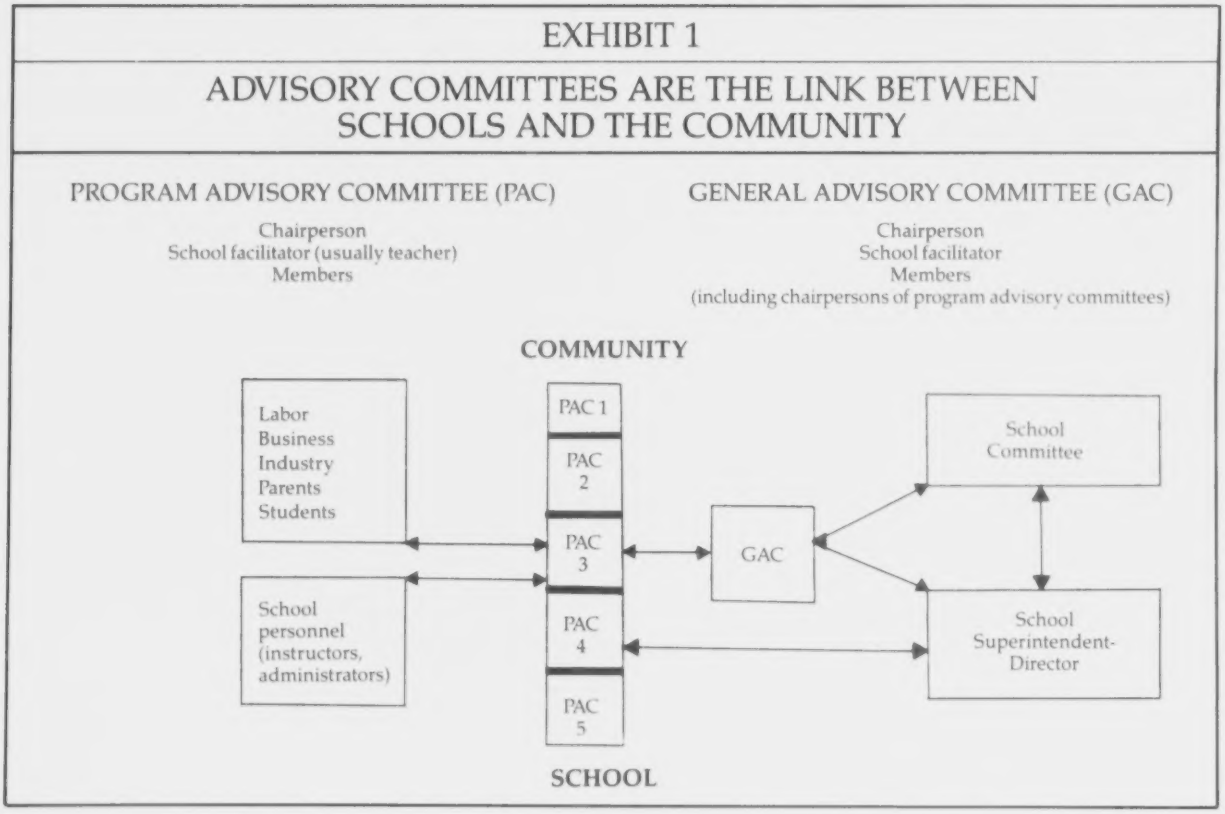
The chair of the general advisory committee is the spokesperson for the committee in meetings with school administrators or the school committee. He or she is responsible for working with the school administrator to set agendas and plan and coordinate general advisory committee meetings.

THE FACILITATOR

A representative of the school serves as facilitator to the advisory committee. In general, this individual conveys the concerns or priorities of the school to the advisory committee and assists the advisory committee to carry out its mission. He or she is not a voting member, but rather a liaison between the school and the advisory committee.

EXHIBIT 1

ADVISORY COMMITTEES ARE THE LINK BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY



A list of rules and regulations and expectations of a member is very helpful. To know exactly what the school would like from you and what you should not be involved in would make the job of committee member more productive.

Chapter 74 Regulations stipulate that the program manager or department head may serve as facilitator (or secretary) to the program advisory committee. Alternatively, the facilitator may be an administrator designated by the superintendent-director or vocational-technical director to coordinate and supervise the work of advisory committees for the school.

Facilitators of program advisory committees play a pivotal role in ensuring the success of their committees. They are sometimes asked to gather data to assist the committees in their reviews (e.g., enrollment or placement records; student assessment and test scores). They also coordinate the logistics of committee meetings (mailing invitations and agendas; taking minutes and overseeing their distribution). Perhaps most important, facilitators serve as a conduit of information between the advisory committees and their colleagues on the instructional staff. It is this free flow of communication that guarantees that the advisory committee's work will be most beneficial to the program. Exhibit 2 lists the responsibilities of facilitators of program advisory committees.

According to Chapter 74 Regulations, the facilitator of the general advisory committee may be the chief administrative officer of the school committee or board of trustees; in some schools the chief administrative officer may designate this role to another key administrator in the school. The facilitator of the general advisory committee works with the committee chair to plan and conduct productive meetings.

EXHIBIT 2

ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR OF PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEES

In planning and conducting meetings of the program advisory committee, the facilitator:

1. Meets with the committee in planning the annual program of work.
2. Mails invitations, agendas, and necessary materials in advance of the meetings to members, ex officio members, and guests.
3. Provides necessary materials (paper, pencils, agendas, a list of members, file folders, file space, refreshments, etc.) to members at meetings.
4. Introduces members to one another.
5. Guides the committee in electing a chairperson and other officers specified in the operating rules.
6. Guides the committee in developing and adopting a set of operating rules.
7. Assists the committee in planning the annual program of work.
8. Provides background information on vocational-technical program objectives, activities, and long-range plans for improvement.
9. Maintains close communication among the committee, instructional staff, and school administration.
10. Assists the committee in preparing minutes of its meetings and other reports, as appropriate.

EXHIBIT 3

SUGGESTED RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL STAFF MEMBER ASSIGNED TO MANAGE CHAPTER 74 ADVISORY COMMITTEES

1. Establish continuity and uniformity among program advisory committees.
2. Diversify and improve committee memberships where needed.
3. Establish student representation at, and participation in, advisory committee meetings.
4. Aid in scheduling and planning agendas for the general advisory committee, and coordinate these activities with the superintendent-director or vocational-technical director.
5. Find and utilize methods to improve communications among the school committee, industry, administration, advisory committees, staff, and students.
6. Create and develop a four-year advisory committee plan for each program, consisting of short- and long-term goals and objectives and suggesting creative activities to promote positive continuity of these groups; review plans with the superintendent-director or vocational-technical director and the school committee.
7. Develop and revise schoolwide guidelines for conducting program advisory committee meetings.
8. Create and develop a resource library, and conduct in-house training in running successful advisory committee activities.
9. Monitor and/or host two general advisory committee meetings per year and one appreciation meeting, one of which is held with the school committee.
10. Attend selected program advisory committee meetings to support newly elected chairpersons and coach them, when asked to do so.
11. Establish records for each program and its activities; summarize accomplishments and cite future objectives for the superintendent-director or vocational-technical director and school committee.
12. Monitor program advisory committees' progress by use of yearly evaluations.

THE VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL ADMINISTRATOR

The school superintendent-director or vocational-technical director lays the groundwork for effective use of advisory committees. The administrator's perspective sets the tone for the entire school: where the administrator places a high value on advisory committees, so will the teachers, and, in turn, the committee members themselves.

How can vocational-technical administrators convey their high regard for advisory committees?

- by personally attending general and program advisory committee meetings whenever possible;
- by setting aside funds in the school budget to provide refreshments and an annual banquet for advisory committee members;
- by including teacher participation in advisory committee activities as a contractual item;
- by incorporating into teachers' performance evaluations an assessment of their work with program advisory committees; or
- by delegating full responsibility for all advisory committee functions to a single staff person, and compensating him or her for the extra duties. Exhibit 3 presents a proposed job description for such an individual.

reporting protocols

Program advisory committee reports are submitted to the general advisory committee, which may identify problems or recommendations common to several program areas and adopt them for its own consideration. Recommendations that pertain solely to a single program may be submitted directly by the program advisory committee to the vocational-technical administrator, to the school committee, or to both, as well as through the general advisory committee. Procedures should be established to guide this information flow so that recommendations do not fall through the cracks.

Advisory committee reports to the school committee may be presented orally or in writing, or both. However, at least one meeting each year of the general advisory committee must be conducted with the school committee as an agenda item at a scheduled school committee meeting.

Feedback from the vocational-technical administrator or the school committee on specific recommendations should go via the general advisory committee to the program advisory committee. ("Organizing Advisory Committee Meetings" contains a section on how to encourage feedback on advisory committee recommendations.) Written comments are necessary to ensure that all advisory committee members are properly informed of the responses to their recommendations.

setting policy

Some vocational-technical administrators recommend working with the school committee to develop official policies to govern the establishment and management of program and general advisory committees within a school district.

The primary reason for having formal policies or bylaws is to ensure continuity in how advisory committees are created and maintained. That way, if responsibility for managing advisory committees should change hands within the school, there will be a reference to guide newcomers. Also, formal policies provide an important foundation if there are challenges to the process.

Policies or bylaws governing advisory committees might contain the following elements:

- the stated purpose of the policy (or bylaws);
- definition of the advisory committee;
- membership requirements (including overall composition, method of appointment, and term of service, where appropriate);
- rules for electing committee officers, and definitions of their duties;
- guidelines for frequency and timing of meetings;
- reporting requirements;
- functions of the advisory committee; and
- procedures for amending the policy or bylaws.

Exhibit 4 provides an example of organizational bylaws governing vocational-technical advisory committees.

EXHIBIT 4

ORGANIZATIONAL BYLAWS FOR VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEES

School District/Institution

ARTICLE I. NAME AND PURPOSE

Section 1. The named program advisory committee for vocational-technical education shall exist only during such time as it may be authorized to serve by the duly constituted school committee.

Section 2. The purposes and duties of the named program advisory committee shall be to:

a. assess the needs of the community as related to vocational-technical education program offerings;
b. formulate recommendations for the improvement of vocational-technical education instruction and facilities;
c. assess program and course offerings as related to objectives;
d. assist in the articulation of vocational-technical education program(s) offered by the school with employment opportunities;
e. assist in the development of long-range goals for vocational-technical education within the school district;
f. advise on the revision of objectives for program(s) as warranted by study and/or evaluation;
g. serve as an avenue of communication between education and the world of work;
h. evaluate annually the progress made toward established goals; and
i. other: _____

_____

ARTICLE II: ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Appointments to the program advisory committee shall be made by _____ (appointing group).

Section 2. The program advisory committee shall consist of a minimum of _____ members and _____ ex officio members. A member of the vocational-technical program instructional staff shall serve as facilitator to the committee.

Section 3. The program advisory committee membership shall be selected as representative of the following in the area or region served:

a. geographical sections of the school district(s) or region;
b. types of businesses and industries;
c. parents and students;
d. occupational representation;
e. minorities;
f. male and female; and
g. special-needs groups.

Section 4. The term of appointment for members shall begin on _____.

Section 5. Members shall be appointed for one-year renewable terms.

ARTICLE III. LEADERSHIP

Section 1. The officers of the committee shall be the chairperson, vice chairperson, and other such officers as may be required.

Section 2. The election of officers shall be at the _____ (month) meeting each year.

The members shall be elected by a majority vote of the committee membership.

Section 3. Chairperson. The chairperson shall be elected by the committee members. The chairperson shall:

a. preside at all committee meetings;
b. appoint special subcommittees as the need arises;
c. work closely with the school staff and administration in organizing committee activities; and
d. represent the program advisory committee at all meetings of the general advisory committee.

Section 4. Vice chairperson. The vice chairperson shall perform the duties of the chairperson in his or her absence.

Section 5. Facilitator. The facilitator shall:

a. keep records of attendance;
b. disseminate and organize minutes, meeting notices, agendas, and other documents; and
c. maintain a permanent record of all committee activities.

Section 6. Staff. A staff person(s) shall be assigned the responsibility of being the facilitator for the program advisory committee within the school. This person will work closely with the committee chairperson in providing necessary leadership, but will not have a vote in committee deliberations.

ARTICLE IV. MEETINGS

Section 1. _____ regular and/or special meetings of the program advisory committee shall be held during the year.

Section 2. Written notices of committee meetings shall be mailed to all members at least _____ (number) days before each meeting.

Section 3. Meetings shall be no more than _____ hours in length unless such meetings are continued by the vote of committee membership.

Section 4. Agendas shall be prepared and disseminated by _____ (facilitator).

Section 5. Standing or special subcommittees shall be appointed by the chairperson as the need arises.

ARTICLE V. ANNUAL PROGRAM

Section 1. The program advisory committee shall plan and function under an annual program of work.

Section 2. The program of work for each ensuing year will be discussed and approved during the _____ (month) meeting each year.

ARTICLE VI. AMENDMENTS

Section 1. These bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of active members at any regular committee meeting, provided that notice of such proposed change has been included in the call of the meeting.

Adapted from *Handbook for Local or Regional Technical Committees for Vocational Technical Education*, Connecticut State Council on Vocational-Technical Education, Hartford, 1986, pp. 9-12.

Recruiting Your Advisory Committee Members

Chapter 74 offers important guidelines for the composition of program advisory committees. Specifically, each program advisory committee should:

- be appointed by the school committee or board of trusteees;
- consist of representatives of local business and industry related to the program area, organized labor, parents, and students; and
- ***not*** contain members of the school committee, board of trustees, or other school officials.

In establishing program advisory committees, schools must consider not only the needs of their vocational-technical programs, but also the motivations of potential advisors. Advisory committees are most effective when interests are shared between the members and the school. This chapter discusses how to assess the range of representation and characteristics of a good advisory committee. It also offers tips for recruiting new members and reinforcing their contributions to the program.

how large should the committee be?

A literal reading of Chapter 74 suggests four advisors (business and industry, organized labor, parents, students). However, most effective committees appear to have more than four members, and some have as many as fifteen. Larger committees can provide better representation of the local business community, and they ensure sufficient turnout at meetings so that important decisions can be made.

One factor in determining the size of your committee may be the number of occupation-related businesses in your community. On the one hand, if there are only four machine shops, it may be hard to recruit a large committee for the machine program. On the other hand, it may be helpful to look beyond the immediate community for advisory committee members. Prospective advisors, job placements, and other training opportunities may come from businesses within easy commuting distance.

where does your program stand?

Another factor to consider is the potential for conflicts of interest among the committee members. Having too many representatives of one company may raise eyebrows. The best way to avoid problems is to achieve a healthy mix of company representation in the advisory committee, especially among companies that sell products to the school or employ co-op students or graduates of the program.

Regardless of the philosophy about the optimal size of advisory committees, there is a perennial need for "fresh blood" to stimulate and strengthen the work of the committee. Thus, the search for new advisors is ongoing. Vocational-technical school administrators and instructors must always be alert for opportunities to expand or improve committee membership.

Building a strong advisory committee depends, to some extent, on the current status of your program and the existing committee.

Are you starting a new vocational-technical program? If so, then you have a clean slate and an opportunity to draw from all the available resources of talent and skill in your community. The challenge is to identify and organize a group of people whose experience and enthusiasm can inspire and motivate the development of a top-quality program.

When Proposition 2½ threatened many teachers with the loss of their jobs, one Massachusetts school instituted a retraining program for adults. Guided by the combined expertise of bankers, executives, and technical personnel from several high-tech companies, and representatives of several state agencies (the Division of Occupational Education, the Division of Employment Security, the Department of Public Welfare, the Massachusetts Teachers Association), hundreds of former teachers began receiving the most up-to-date computer-related training available, most have now secured jobs in the high-tech field.

One vocational-technical director recruited an advisory committee for a planned health care program by inviting, among others, candidates for the program's teaching position. These advisors were extremely enthusiastic in shaping the new program: identifying needed equipment, explaining state licensing regulations, and assessing employment trends.

Are you seeking to rebuild or revitalize an existing committee? If so, the first step is to evaluate the composition, strengths, and weaknesses of your current membership.

Does the committee lack representation from one of the categories required by Chapter 74?

Maintaining an up-to-date roster of committee membership makes it easy to identify the personal characteristics and organizational affiliations of

each advisor. Several schools keep computer files of their advisory committee members, their work and home addresses and telephone numbers, and their tenure on the committee. These files can be updated easily as advisors move their residences or businesses, or as new members are recruited and inactive members are replaced. Exhibit 5 presents a sample form used for this purpose.

What does your program need?

Are the curriculum and equipment outdated? Reviewing professional activities and affiliations of instructional staff can prove helpful in identifying both the needs of the program and the parallel needs for advisors who keep current in their fields.

Are there problems recruiting students or placing graduates? Statistics on recruitment and placement can be displayed graphically to reveal historical and projected trends. Similar data should be available for industry, employment, and population trends in your community. If problems in recruitment or placement are revealed, your program could benefit from having the input of a professional personnel administrator or career counselor on the advisory committee.

Not everyone is suited for a career in auto-body repair. Students who are hard to place in repair shops may be successfully redirected toward related careers, for example, in parts sales or insurance appraisal. To help identify employment trends in these related fields, some schools have expanded their advisory committees to include representatives of these industries, personnel managers from large companies, and representatives of the state Division of Employment Security.

EXHIBIT 5

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER INFORMATION FORM

(Name of School)

DEPARTMENT _____

DATE _____

NAME _____

EMPLOYMENT ADDRESS: ☐ check if you want mail sent to your office

_____
COMPANY NAME

_____
STREET

_____
CITY STATE ZIP PHONE

HOME ADDRESS: ☐ check if you want mail sent to your home

_____
STREET

_____
CITY STATE ZIP PHONE

What are the school's ambitions over the next five years? Written plans developed by a school's administration often identify glaring needs for help in adapting vocational-technical programs to fit the larger picture of improvement or expansion in the future. Advisory committee members from progressive companies can help to guide the program on a parallel course with industry trends.

Are some members losing interest? Are their ideas getting stale?

Advisors should be encouraged to serve as long as they remain interested and active. They should be appointed for a one-year term of service, which can be renewed indefinitely or terminated when interest wanes.

There are two ways of assessing advisors' level of interest in their work on the committee. One is to ask them directly, for example, by sending a form to advisors at the end of each school year to ascertain whether they intend to continue (see Exhibit 6). The second method relies on indirect indicators of interest: keeping attendance profiles for committee meetings to assess the members' record of participation, and reviewing minutes to assess contributions made by individual committee members.

Other tips for evaluating the overall effectiveness of advisory committees are provided in *"Evaluating Committee Effectiveness."*

EXHIBIT 6

FORM SOLICITING CONTINUED MEMBERSHIP

Vocational-Technical Division — (Name of School)

Please Circle One:

1. I *do*/*do not* wish to continue as an advisory committee member.
   If you do not wish to continue, why not?
2. The present time/format (e.g., 12:00 noon/luncheon format) *is*/*is not* acceptable.
   If it is not acceptable, please recommend another time/format.
3. The number of meetings *is*/*is not* acceptable.
   If it is not acceptable, please make a recommendation:
4. The present location *is*/*is not* acceptable.
   If it is not acceptable, please recommend another location:
5. I cannot attend meetings, but I will still be available for the school to contact as needed. Yes/No
6. Other comments, criticisms, recommendations (new members?):

Name _____

Company/Firm _____

Date _____

what makes a good advisor?

When recruiting potential advisors, you will find it helpful to keep in mind the reasons that busy people choose to volunteer their time. That way, you can appeal to these motives when you solicit members for your committee.

There are probably as many motives for serving on advisory committees as there are people who do it. People choose to be advisors because:

- they consider it a personal challenge to see what they can accomplish for the school;
- they have a genuine desire to help students achieve, or to return to the school what they received as students;
- they are concerned about the quality of vocational-technical education;
- they welcome an opportunity for networking with their colleagues in the context of advisory committee meetings;
- they want to add evidence of "civic responsibility" to their resume;
- they want first choice to employ top graduates of the program; and
- they want some good publicity for themselves or their businesses.

I have been very pleased with the contributions advisory committees have made. I have served with willing and enthusiastic members. Just as important is the attitude of the school staff, and that has been of an open and welcome response to us.

What are the qualities of a good advisor? How can you identify people who will make positive contributions to your program? Time, energy, and knowledge of industry trends are perhaps the most critical characteristics.

When recruiting advisory committee members, be explicit about the time requirements, and explore the candidate's availability to serve in a less formal capacity. Prospective advisors should be aware of how many committee meetings will be scheduled, at what time of day, and for how long. Some people might lack the time to attend formal meetings but be more than willing to consult by telephone and pitch in as needed.

One vocational-technical director calls on a particular advisor when supplies run low in the carpentry shop. The advisor may not always have the materials on hand, but often directs the school to other sources or makes the initial contacts personally. This individual rarely attends meetings, yet makes invaluable contributions to the program nevertheless.

Effective advisors are people who stay in the forefront of change in their industry. Retired auto-body repair workers may have an abundance of time and energy, but the committee needs members who are knowledgeable about unibody construction as well. Similarly, drafting committees need to include members who have CAD/CAM experience.

Should you recruit chief executive officers (CEOs) or look to representatives of the rank and file? The answer depends partly on where your program currently stands. On the one hand, establishing a new program or rejuvenating a weak, yet valuable one may require the combined efforts of individuals who command respect and have a certain amount of clout in the business community. On the other hand, a long-standing program may need periodic infusions of new technology or methods, which are more likely to come from people who are working directly in the field.

CEOs may look impressive on the roster of advisory committee members, but they are also busy people who may not be able to devote the time and energy to building a strong vocational-technical program. Some schools encourage CEOs to volunteer the services of selected employees to fulfill the advisor role in their place. Such designees are usually sharp, motivated people (to have been noticed by the CEO in the first place); they may also be able to gain the ear of the CEO if there is a need for additional resources or input from a higher level.

where do you look for advisors?

Good advisors can come from many sectors of the community. Where you look for potential advisors depends, first, on whether your program is new or established and, second, on the type of individuals you need.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES

Especially when you are starting a new committee, contact the chamber of commerce for lists of businesses in the particular trade. Directories of area businesses, including the local Yellow Pages, can also be a good starting point. The Massachusetts Occupational Information Coordinating Committee has published *The Job Guide,* a three-volume work that lists employers by occupation and by fifteen geographic areas of the state. Another example of such directories is *The Minority and Women Business Directory,* published by the State Office of Minority Business Assistance (SOMBA) of the Massachusetts Department of Commerce. This publication organizes firms by industry category and presents profiles of each firm; a supplement cites nonprofit organizations certified by SOMBA.

These sources may also include information on the size of each company, the occupational areas involved, and the number of employees. Such data are helpful in determining an appropriate mix of business and industry advisors. For example, "progressive" companies are likely sources of good advisors, but keep in mind the proportion of jobs available within these organizations or their counterparts in nearby communities. Your committee should include representatives of businesses relying on traditional practices as well.

For committees serving well-established programs, most vocational-technical directors look first ***within their own schools*** for recommendations of new advisors. Administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, and co-op coordinators all have contacts with the business sector and should be able to name several promising candidates. Current advisory committee members may be able to recommend colleagues. Teachers and advisors from other schools with similar programs are likely to have additional contacts in your community.

One school committee member recommended that a former university professor specializing in food for the space program be recruited for membership in the school's food occupations program advisory committee.

Employers of program graduates or of co-op students can make good program advisors, provided that they have a genuine interest in improving the program overall, not just in refining it to meet their own particular needs. Vocational-technical directors suggest following up on student placements (whether in jobs or on co-op) to assess the employer's relationship with the students and the quality of on-the-job training. These are good clues to the individual's commitment to vocational-technical education.

One vocational-technical director maintains a master list of all tradespeople he has met and students he has taught in teacher-training courses over his thirty-year career in vocational-technical education. He consults this list whenever the need arises for new committee members in his school.

Graduates of vocational-technical programs are often delighted to serve on advisory committees. Many enjoy maintaining contacts with their school and welcome the chance to help other students succeed. Some may have teaching in mind as a future occupation and wish to learn more about vocational-technical education. Program graduates also serve as positive role models for students who are currently enrolled in the program.

Finally, ***vendors*** of supplies and equipment for the program often develop a genuine interest in it because of their ongoing contacts. These individuals are well aware of occupational trends and can offer valuable information input as advisory committee members.

LABOR REPRESENTATIVES

Two important resources for recruiting labor representatives are the Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committees, set up for each trade area, local unions, and trade union associations. Each is listed in the telephone directory or can be located through the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training (BAT), listed under the U.S. Department of Labor, or through the state Division of Employment Security. Another source is the Human Resources Development Institute of the AFL-CIO.

MINORITY OR SPECIAL-NEEDS REPRESENTATIVES

If you are seeking a representative of a minority or special-needs population, community-based organizations or associations are an additional source to identify members who are working in specific occupations. One important contact is the Equity Unit at the state Division of Occupational Education, which may be able to put you in touch with human resources in your area. For example, the Nontraditional Occupations Support Group in Massachusetts is made up of school teachers, counselors, administrators, and others who are committed to sharing resources and expertise to increase the participation of young men and women in all vocational-technical programs. Similarly, local chapters of the Urban League, the NAACP, the Puerto Rican Forum, Indian Councils, Opportunities Industrialization Centers (OIC), Jobs in Industry (working to place the disabled in the private sector), and the Private Industry Councils (PICs) of the Joint

Training and Partnership Act (JTPA) can also be asked to point to several members who own or operate businesses in related industries. Although these organizations may not necessarily have employment or vocational-technical education as their primary mission, principals of these groups can often identify colleagues who work in specific trades or industries.

Connections is a group of women in Boston whose membership includes women in nontraditional occupations who are interested in sharing information with students or adult women. They may know of other contacts throughout Massachusetts.

The Directory of Hispanic Role Models, *developed by The Network in Andover, Massachusetts, identifies individuals who are willing to volunteer their time in the interests of education. They, or someone they know, may be able to identify a candidate for your advisory committee.*

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Schools in Massachusetts generally use one of two methods for selecting the advisory committee's student member. Some hold elections among the students in the program; this may be accomplished in tandem with the election of class officers. Others simply allow instructors to select the student of their choice. This does not always mean a student who excels in the program, but rather a reasonably good student who is thoughtful, willing to speak out (especially among adults), and respected by fellow students.

PARENT REPRESENTATIVES

Parent members of advisory committees can be the parents of the student member. Alternatively, they may be parents of other students in the program. Some schools prefer, wherever possible, to invite parents who are themselves employed in the occupational area. Above all, the parent member should be interested in the vocational-technical training provided by the school and willing to voice issues and concerns.

---

the logistics of recruitment

There are three ways to recruit advisors:

- by requesting volunteers;
- by soliciting nominations and selecting committee members through appointment or election; and
- by selecting individuals directly.

Which of these methods you use depends largely on whether you have already targeted specific individuals for your committee.

It was a great honor to serve as a committee member. It gave the opportunity to share knowledge and at the same time gain knowledge as to what our vocational-technical schools are producing in students, such as skills for the industrial fields. In most cases, the results are exceptional as to student quality.

Soliciting volunteers may be a good method for organizing a new committee in a field where local leaders are not known to the school. Some schools have even advertised in the local newspaper for prospective advisory committee members. Be advised, however, that a fairly structured screening system should be prepared to sort through the range of responses that are likely to result.

Sending letters to business associations or community organizations and soliciting nominations from their memberships can also be an effective approach to recruitment (see Exhibit 7). Letters should always be followed up with telephone calls to the president or director of the association.

Once potential advisors are identified, recruiting them for committee membership may entail a formal process. For example:

Step 1: The names of prospective advisors are solicited.

Step 2: The vocational-technical administrator sends candidates an invitation (see Exhibit 8) and a letter of intent (see Exhibit 9) to complete and return if they are interested in serving on the committee.

Step 3: Lead teachers fill out a form (see Exhibit 10) to provide information supporting each nomination. The vocational-technical administrator verifies this information by making a few phone calls, for example, to the candidates and their employers.

Step 4: The vocational-technical administrator summarizes all the available data on a recommendation form (see Exhibit 11) that is submitted with the signed letter of intent to the school superintendent-director.

Step 5: If the superintendent-director approves the nomination, he or she submits the letter of intent to the school committee, which formally appoints the advisor to a specified term.

Step 6: The vocational-technical administrator sends letters to the new advisors confirming their membership in the committee (see Exhibit 12).

Personal telephone contacts with prospective advisors are another popular approach to recruiting. Co-op coordinators and guidance counselors, in particular, are constantly in the field and have many opportunities to solicit potential advisory committee members. Many vocational-technical personnel credit the "personal touch" with acquiring some of their most valuable advisors. Verbal agreements should, of course, be confirmed in writing for your records.

In one Massachusetts community, the vocational-technical director was asked to help construct a new playground that was being developed by a civic-minded sales manager from a local graphics firm. After several months of partnership on this project, the vocational-technical director informally asked the sales manager to serve as an advisor. This individual has since become one of the school's staunchest supporters; the graphics firm welcomes student field trips, hires co-op students, and donates various materials to the school's drafting program.

EXHIBIT 7

LETTER SOLICITING NOMINATIONS

Dear [President/Director]:

The _____ program at _____ school is trying to identify leaders in the _____(town)_____ business community who will help us develop a vocational-technical program that is both reflective of and responsive to the needs of local industry.

We are asking you to draw on your knowledge of _____(occupational area)_____ in our community and identify individuals who are (1) current with emerging trends and (2) concerned about the education and training of workers entering this field. Our goal is to establish a volunteer advisory committee that will meet _____ times during the school year to review employment trends, recommend needed equipment, examine the curriculum, and generally advise our instructional staff on how best to prepare students for entry-level positions in _____(occupational area)_____.

I will call you next week to answer any questions you may have and to solicit your nominations for advisory committee members.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

EXHIBIT 8

LETTER INVITING A POSSIBLE CANDIDATE

Dear _____:

The _____(school)_____ is committed to excellence in its vocational-technical programs. To help us achieve this aim, we reach out to leaders in business, industry, and labor, and to parents and students, and ask them to work with us as advisors in improving our curriculum and facilities for students in _____(town served)_____.

Your name has been suggested for possible membership on our _____ Program Advisory Committee. By participating in this committee, you will have an opportunity to guide the _____(school)_____ in preparing students for entry-level jobs in _____(field)_____.

Each Program Advisory Committee meets _____ times each school year. Meetings are usually held _____(time and location)_____. In addition, our instructional staff occasionally calls upon advisors informally, as the need arises.

If you are interested in serving on this committee, please complete the attached Letter of Intent and return it to me at your earliest convenience. Please don't hesitate to call me if you have any questions.

EXHIBIT 9

[Name of School and Program Advisory Committee]

LETTER OF INTENT

Dear (Vocational-Technical Director):

I, _____, wish to become a member of the _____ Program Advisory Committee at (school).

Home address:

_____

_____

Phone: _____

Business address:

Title: _____

_____

_____

Phone: _____

Below is a brief summary of my professional background:

Various positions held: _____

_____

Total years experience in this occupational area: _____

Brief summary of relevant experience: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Signature _____

Date _____

EXHIBIT 10

[Name of School]

RECOMMENDATION OF CANDIDATE TO PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TO: (Vocational-Technical Director) DATE: _____

FROM: (Lead Teacher Name) _____

CANDIDATE: _____

1. What uniquely qualifies this person to serve on this Program Advisory Committee?

2. What strength or particular expertise does this person bring to the Program Advisory Committee?

3. In which of the following areas does this person have strengths, and why? Check those that apply.
   a. ☐ job placements
   b. ☐ field trips
   c. ☐ curriculum development
   d. ☐ surplus materials and donations
   e. ☐ community relations

4. Other comments: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

EXHIBIT 11

[Name of School]

RECOMMENDATION OF CANDIDATE TO [PROGRAM NAME] PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TO: (Superintendent-Director) DATE: _____

FROM: (Vocational-Technical Director)

CANDIDATE: _____

COMMENTS:

EXHIBIT 12

LETTER CONFIRMING MEMBERSHIP

Dear _____:

I am pleased to inform you that the School Committee has accepted your membership in the _____ Program Advisory Committee for the next school year.

Enclosed for your information are some materials to explain the goals and objectives of our school, the _____ program, and your role as a program advisor. I will be contacting you soon, when our first Program Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled.

Your experience and expertise will help us provide the best and most up-to-date training, so necessary for a student's successful transition to work. I appreciate your interest in our _____ program and _____ school, and I look forward to working with you.

At the beginning of each school year, the proposed list of advisory committee members should be submitted to the school committee for formal approval, as required by Chapter 74. Exhibit 13 provides a convenient form for nominating a slate of advisory committee members.

EXHIBIT 13

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER NOMINATION FORM

DATE FILED _____ NOMINATION FORM FOR _____ (school year)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE IN _____ (program)

PERSON (full name and job description/title)	BUSINESS FIRM AND ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER	HOME ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
FACILITATOR		

orienting new advisors to their role

New advisors will need some orientation to the world of vocational-technical education and their role in it. Many schools have developed packages of introductory materials that may include:

- a copy of the Chapter 74 Regulations;
- a general brochure on the school's vocational-technical programs;
- a policy of the school committee or superintendent-director regarding program and general advisory committees;
- written descriptions of the school's expectations of its advisory committees; and
- sample reports prepared by advisory committees.

By providing new advisors with written "job descriptions," schools can lay the ground rules for effective participation, explicitly identifying activities that may or may not be appropriate.

how to thank your advisors

Schools recognize the contributions of their advisory committee members in a variety of ways:

- by sending letters of appreciation (see Exhibit 14);
- by presenting them with plaques or printed certificates of appreciation;
- by giving them identification or membership cards that allow them to attend school functions such as athletic events or special programs;
- by inviting them to at least one formal dinner each year;
- by including photographs of advisory committee members in the school yearbook; and
- by generating media stories about the work of advisory committees.

Even inactive members can be politely thanked for their contributions in a way that leaves them free to exit gracefully from their obligation to the school. Several schools have developed diplomatic letters for this purpose (see Exhibit 15).

Most dedicated advisory committee members, however, appear to be far less impressed by tangible expressions of gratitude than they are by personal feelings of accomplishment. For this reason, vocational-technical administrators should take special care to ensure that advisors get frequent feedback—whether informally or in written reports—on the success of their recommendations. Without this feedback, even the most enthusiastic advisor will lose confidence in his or her effectiveness. More discussion on feedback is provided in *"Organizing Advisory Committee Meetings."*

EXHIBIT 14

LETTER OF RECOGNITION/RECRUITMENT

Dear _____:

On behalf of _____(program and school)_____, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to you for your faithful participation in our Program Advisory Committee activities during the past school year. Your contributions were invaluable, and resulted in numerous program and curriculum improvements. _____[List several examples]_____. The vocational-technical students and faculty who benefited directly from these improvements also wish to express their thanks to you, and encourage your continued support and service.

At this time I am in the process of organizing the committee for the coming school year. I encourage you to remain as an active Program Advisory Committee member and continue to share with us your thoughts and expertise.

Sincerely,

_____

EXHIBIT 15

LETTER TO AN INACTIVE MEMBER

Dear _____:

On behalf of the _____(program and school)_____, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to you for serving as a member of our Program Advisory Committee.

The _____(program)_____ has benefited greatly from the work of your committee. I realize, however, that our advisors are very busy, with many competing demands on their time, and I am grateful for your interest and involvement over the past _____ year(s).

Organizing Advisory Committee Meetings

Schools in Massachusetts are free to schedule and manage their advisory committee meetings within the limited constraints of Chapter 74:

- both program and general advisory committees must meet at least semiannually, and
- at least one meeting of the general advisory committee must be held jointly with the school committee or board of trustees.

This chapter reviews several alternative approaches to organizing advisory committee meetings.

when should advisory committees meet?

TIME OF YEAR

Two meetings per school year are required. Most active committees meet more often, some as frequently as every month. However, meetings should *not* be called simply for the sake of holding a meeting. There should always be some business to discuss.

General Advisory Committees

A common approach to scheduling general advisory committee meetings is to sponsor fall and spring meetings. One meeting must be held jointly with the school committee. This joint meeting should be an item on the school committee's agenda; ideally, it would be timed to coincide with the school committee's annual budget deliberations. Sometimes at these meetings the chair of each program advisory committee presents a report; alternatively, the general advisory committee chairperson delivers a comprehensive report. Some Massachusetts vocational-technical schools have developed systematic ways to improve the effectiveness of their general advisory committee.

One school recommends a cyclical approach:

First, the superintendent-director submits a "laundry list" of issues to the school committee, which ranks them and adds its own issues.

At the fall meeting of the general advisory committee, the superintendent-director and the school committee, the final "wish list" is given to the general advisory committee for consideration over the coming school year. The advisors usually select three issues to focus on.

Throughout the school year, the general advisory committee researches its slate of issues and solicits input from the program advisory committees.

In the spring, at another joint meeting with the superintendent-director and the school committee, the general advisory committee reports on its research and presents the resulting recommendations.

These recommendations, in turn, form the basis for the next year's mandate from the school committee.

At another school, all general and program advisory committee members meet with the school's administration and the school committee three times a year: In the fall, the vocational-technical director describes the school's plans for the year and any grants that are being pursued. Midyear, the vocational-technical director presents a needs assessment, compiled from the minutes of program advisory committee meetings. And in the spring, a progress report for the year—that is, feedback on plans and accomplishments—is the focus of the presentation.

Program Advisory Committees

Program advisory committee meetings are usually scheduled as convenient throughout the school year. Some schools reserve the option to call ad hoc meetings when the need arises—for example, when grant applications are being submitted and advisors' input is desired.

Each September, one school prepares a master schedule of all program and general advisory committee meetings for the entire year. Meetings are staggered so that the vocational-technical director (or other designated administrative personnel) can attend every meeting.

An alternative model is to include all program advisory committee members in at least two general meetings each year. After the business meeting is conducted and the dinner is served, members break up into their respective program areas for their program committee meetings.

EXHIBIT 16

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING SCHEDULE

(19____-19____)

_____
Department

Mtg.	Date	Time	Place
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Staff Note: Number of meetings to be held.

- Recommended 3 per school year
- Less than 3, by Superintendent's approval
- This schedule is due in the central office the last day of October each school year

Exhibit 16 shows a form used by one school to facilitate scheduling of program advisory committee meetings.

Which Comes First?

There are two opinions on the more effective sequence of general and program advisory committee meetings. One advocates holding the general advisory committee meeting first, to set priorities for the program committees' consideration; the second prefers to hold program advisory committee meetings first, so that the general committee can review the minutes to identify issues that appear to cross program areas and therefore warrant their attention.

The sequence you choose may depend on the relative strength of the general advisory committee vis-a-vis the individual program committees. Where the general advisory committee proactively identifies issues and sets schoolwide agendas with the superintendent-director, vocational-technical director, and/or school committee, it may be wise to convene them first so that they can set priorities for the program advisory committees to research and discuss. Elsewhere, where the general advisory committee is reactive to the suggestions of its component program committees, the latter groups should meet first to set the agenda for the general advisory committee. It is probably more effective to have the stronger committee meet first.

Exhibit 17 shows how one school times its general and program advisory committee meetings to coincide with the school committee's budget and planning process.

EXHIBIT 17

SUGGESTED SCHEDULE AND PROCEDURES

The general schedule of school planning and evaluation is shown in column A below. A sample coordinated activity schedule for advisory committees is shown in columns B and C.

COLUMN A SCHOOL SCHEDULE	COLUMN B PROGRAM ADVISORY	COLUMN C GENERAL ADVISORY
1. MAY/JUNE Initial budget planning for the school year beyond the next school year.	a. Final meeting for current school year. b. Elect chairperson and vice-chairperson for next school year. c. Conduct initial review of budget needs for dept. d. Determine com. membership for next school year.	a. Final meeting for current school yr. b. General business and appreciation activities.
2. SEPT./OCT. a. Final staff budget planning for next school year. b. Senior teachers file nomination forms for Program Advisory Committees by Sept. 10th.	a. Hold first meeting of school year. b. Establish meeting plan (agenda items) and schedule for full year. c. Refer any items to General Advisory Committee.	
3. NOV./JAN. School Committee meetings on budget proposal for next school year. The goal is to approve a budget proposal by late January.		Hold first meeting of school year with Program Advisory Com. chairpersons having the opportunity to offer budget and other advice to the School Committee in December.
4. JAN./APRIL a. Program and staff evaluations underway in each dept. b. Legislative hearings held in the State House.	Hold one or more additional meetings to address major issues. Limit time demand to a *maximum* of one meeting per month.	Hold second meeting if a major topic is defined by committee members or the superintendent (legislation, public relations, etc.).

TIME OF DAY

The best time of day for program advisory committee meetings depends on the calendars of those who must attend, whether advisors, instructors, administrators, or other guests. Breakfast, lunch, dinner, and evening meetings have all been scheduled successfully by schools within the Commonwealth. Each time has certain advantages: Daytime meetings allow advisors to visit their respective shop areas and observe students at work. Evening meetings can be held in the shop areas, where advisors can examine equipment, materials, and textbooks. Some schools schedule one evening meeting and one lunchtime meeting each year.

Most advisory committee meetings are scheduled to run between one and three hours, but evening meetings in particular may continue for as long as the advisors care to stay.

Advisory committees almost always meet at the school, but there are exceptions. Occasionally, advisory committees may meet at a local restaurant or at the company facilities of an advisory committee member. The most important criterion in selecting the location is convenience to committee members.

To encourage greater participation by members of one school's distributive education program advisory committee, meetings are held in a conference room in the local shopping mall, where many committee members work.

Regardless of when or where the meeting is scheduled, advisors appreciate refreshments—coffee and doughnuts are perfectly adequate. Some schools set aside funds in their budgets specifically to provide for these snacks and the annual dinners. Elsewhere, refreshments are provided by the school committee.

Finally, contacts with the advisors need not be limited to the context of scheduled committee meetings. Most vocational-technical directors encourage frequent telephone communications with advisors and impromptu meetings as questions or opportunities arise that could benefit from the advisors' input.

When weighing the advantages and disadvantages of a number of CAD/CAM products, one school's drafting instructor invited several advisory committee members to attend the vendors' demonstrations at the school. These additional "meetings" were invaluable in helping the school select the most cost-effective equipment for the drafting program.

Another school held several ad hoc meetings of its electronics program advisory committee to discuss whether the school should offer a two-track curriculum in this area: one for college-bound students, one for entry-level employees. To assist in these deliberations, a personnel manager from a large, locally based electronics firm and a representative from the state Division of Employment Security were invited to speak on employment trends in electronics. As a result of these discussions, the school allocated funds for new equipment to support the college-prep curriculum.

who should attend the meeting?

In addition to the committee members, the facilitator, and other instructional staff in the program area, other individuals are sometimes invited to meetings. For example:

- the vocational-technical director or superintendent-director;
- other administrative personnel;
- the co-op coordinator;
- the guidance counselor;
- a school committee representative;
- members of Private Industry Councils (PICs) or School Improvement Councils;

- State Department of Education personnel; and
- guests or speakers.

Prospective advisory committee members may also be interested in observing a meeting to get a flavor of the work they will be doing if they agree to serve.

how to conduct the meeting

Advisory committee members should be notified of meetings at least three or four weeks in advance. Some schools begin by sending a written *invitation* to all advisory committee members (and any others whose presence is desired), and following up by telephone within one week of the meeting to remind advisors of the date and confirm their intent to attend. Other schools use the opposite approach: they call first and follow up with a written invitation or postcard. (Exhibit 18 provides two sample invitations.) All, however, confirm the importance of the personal contact and "memory jog" in encouraging attendance.

EXHIBIT 18

PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING INVITATIONS

_____
(date)

Dear Program Advisory Committee Member:

You are cordially invited to the next Program Advisory Committee meeting, which will be held at the _____(school)_____ on _____(date)_____. Meeting time will be from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. An icebreaker will be held in the cafeteria from 6:30 to 7:00, featuring hors d'oeuvres and mini-pastries with punch and coffee.

If you attended the last meeting, your program instructor has your Certificate of Appreciation and a plaque to display this well-earned award. You may pick the award up at the shop at either school during any school day. Those not picked up will be available at the _____(date)_____ meeting.

If you did not attend the last meeting, your presence is extremely important at this meeting. A copy of the agenda is enclosed. To truly be effective, we feel we must give you feedback regarding your recommendations. We also need your assistance with the newly designed forms to improve communications between the school and its very important advisory board members.

Please call _____(school secretary)_____ at _____(phone number)_____ for reservations for the meeting, or drop the enclosed form in the mail.

We are looking forward to seeing you _____(date)_____.

Sincerely,

_____

(school letterhead)

_____
(date)

Dear Program Advisory Committee Member:

We have scheduled a meeting of the Drafting Program Advisory Committee for Vocational-Technical Education to be held at _____(school)_____ on _____(date)_____ from _____(time)_____. We plan to have you visit the shop to observe the equipment and course of study. At _____(time)_____, you will have lunch at the _____(cafeteria/school restaurant)_____.

Please telephone _____(school secretary)_____ at _____(phone number)_____ to inform us whether or not you plan to attend.

Sincerely,

Along with the written invitation, many schools include a proposed *agenda* for the meeting. These agendas are usually prepared by the chairperson in conjunction with the committee facilitator. Because one reason for sending an agenda is to spark interest in the meeting, some committee chairs like to be fairly specific about issues they expect to address; others prefer a very general topic guide. To encourage additional input from advisors, some agendas routinely include an item for "new business"; alternatively, advisors can be asked to submit additional agenda items in advance of the meeting date.

Our time was used in a very valuable way. We didn't have much free time, but we helped guide the staff and administration on the needs of the work force. This includes equipment and the use of it, and technological changes in the industry. We set priorities and stayed with them. A committee would be strangled if its members tried to conquer too many objectives.

It is the responsibility of the committee facilitator to keep detailed *minutes* of the meeting. To simplify this process, some use the agenda itself as a tool for organizing their notes; others have developed special forms for the purpose. Minutes generally include a listing of those who attended the meeting, a summary of each issue that was discussed, and any decisions or recommendations that were made. Good documentation of committee meetings can be used to support grant applications and reports to the school committee. Exhibits 19 and 20 present forms used to encourage committee facilitators to report full details of their meetings.

EXHIBIT 19

VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL MINUTES OF THE MEETING

_____ Committee

The meeting was held _____ (month-day-year) at _____ (location).

The following were in attendance:

1 _____ 2 _____
3 _____ 4 _____
5 _____ 6 _____
7 _____ 8 _____
9 _____ 10 _____
11 _____ 12 _____

Subject _____ Action _____

Subject _____ Action _____

Subject _____ Action _____

Subject _____ Action _____

Subject _____ Action _____

Date of the next meeting _____ (month-day-year) at _____ (location)

Special notes:

EXHIBIT 20

VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL
REPORT OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

DATE:

DEPARTMENT:

RECORDER:

PRESENT AT MEETING:

ACTION TAKEN TO RESOLVE ISSUES:

RECOMMENDATIONS:

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION:

DATE: (NEXT PLANNED MEETING)

PLACE IN DEPT. HEAD MAIL; BY FOLLOWING DAY, COPY WILL BE RETURNED TO YOU

Most schools try to have the minutes typed and distributed (usually by the school's clerical staff) within two weeks of the meeting. It is the policy of some schools to send copies of the minutes to any or all of the following people (in addition to all committee members and teachers who attended the meeting):

- committee members who did *not* attend the meeting;
- other instructional staff in the program;
- the superintendent-director or vocational-technical director;
- other administrative personnel;
- the co-op coordinator;
- the guidance counselor;
- a school committee representative.

Copies of the minutes should be kept on file, either by the committee facilitator or by the school administration, for future reference and review under Chapter 74 program evaluation.

managing the meeting

There are a number of ways to ensure a productive meeting. All rely on some form of meeting management.

Many schools hold relatively informal advisory committee meetings, but they follow a routine pattern. The committee facilitator (or vocational-technical director or superintendent-director, if either is present) may welcome the advisory committee members, distribute name tags and make sure that everyone has been introduced, and give a general overview of the purpose of the meeting before turning over control of the meeting to the chairperson. Alternatively, the facilitator may continue to guide the committee through the agenda items, watching the clock to make sure the meeting is keeping to schedule.

In the most informal model, committee decisions or recommendations are reached by consensus. Some schools that have loosely structured meetings prefer to take votes on important issues so that the results can be recorded in the minutes. The table that follows—Methods of Decision Making—displays some of the pros and cons of three different styles of managing advisory committee meetings. The method that works best for your committee will depend on the personalities of committee leadership and the dynamics of your group.

METHODS OF DECISION MAKING

PROCESS	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
AUTHORITARIAN (one member makes decisions; other members acquiesce)	• Decisions can be made quickly • Process is helpful in times of emergency when strong leadership may be necessary	• Implementers may disagree and sabotage the decision • Process does not encourage involvement and commitment • Members may become angry, apathetic, resistant, or alienated • Process does not build decision-making capacity in the organization
MAJORITY RULE (one person, one vote; majority vote wins)	• Decisions can be made quickly • Process is simple and straightforward • Power of the majority supports the decision	• Minority may feel alienated and sabotage the decision • Process does not encourage the participation of all members • Formation of power blocs may be encouraged • Process sets up a win-lose situation
CONSENSUS (members discuss and negotiate an issue, formulating a decision that everyone can "live with")	• Process encourages creative solutions to problems • Process builds trust and commitment • Process generates information and clarifies issues • Implementation is easy because all parties support the decision • Responsibility is decentralized • Process sets up a win-win situation	• Process can be time-consuming • Leader needs to be skilled in order to manage the process • Process can stalemate if conflicts are not resolved effectively

EXHIBIT 21

CHECKLIST FOR MANAGING A MEETING EFFECTIVELY

	YES	NO
Agenda prepared		
Agenda distributed to members before meeting		
Room set up comfortably before meeting begins		
Refreshments available		
Meeting begins on time		
Purpose of the meeting and outcomes are stated and agreed upon		
All members participate in discussion		
Group follows agreed-upon decision-making process		
Items on agenda are covered		
Action items and decisions made are reviewed at end of meeting		
Work commitments and time lines are reviewed		
Group gives input on next meeting's objectives		
Meeting ends on time		

Committee chairpersons and facilitators should, of course, consistently exercise judgment and tact in steering the committee to follow its agenda, reach decisions, and make recommendations where appropriate.

For information on techniques for managing effective meetings, you may wish to consult the following resource: Vocational Instructional Program Advisory Committee Resource Guide, *U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational Education, Washington, D.C., 1984.*

Exhibit 21 presents a checklist to help committee leaders manage meetings effectively.

making recommendations and getting feedback

The end product of all advisory committee activities is a set of recommendations submitted annually to vocational-technical administrators and the school committee. For best effect, these recommendations should be in writing and signed by the committee chairperson on behalf of the entire committee. The report should be as specific as possible, including statistics (e.g., on enrollment or employment trends; cost of new equipment) wherever appropriate to support the committee's findings.

Feedback on recommendations is perhaps the most important motivational tool for all who are involved in advisory committees. Advisors themselves derive great personal satisfaction from "getting a job done," and vocational directors and instructors are encouraged when they see tangible results in their programs.

Periodic informal consultation with staff and administration has proven to be convenient and very productive.

Feedback mechanisms can be direct or indirect, formal or informal. Some schools have developed formats that allow direct feedback from administrators and the school committee to the advisory committees' recommendations, as shown in Exhibit 22. Alternatively, the committee chairperson may report directly back to the committee in a written memorandum.

Other techniques used by school administrators in Massachusetts are letters of appreciation and verbal thanks at general and program advisory committee meetings, inserted in the minutes.

EXHIBIT 22

SUGGESTION FORM

(Please use a separate form for each suggestion.)

Name _____ Occupation _____ Date _____

I can be reached at the following address: _____

Business phone _____ Home phone _____

As a member of the Advisory Committee, I represent one or more of the following groups (please circle):

business/industry/organized labor parent student

1. As a member of the Advisory Committee, I request that the following idea be given serious consideration:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Department head and teacher input relative to the above suggestion: Please respond in writing on this form; use the back of this sheet if more space is required. A copy of your response will be returned to the Advisory Committee member making the suggestion. Please sign or initial your input.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. The following action will be taken by the school administration relative to the above suggestion:

_____

_____

Thank you very much for the time and effort that you have given on behalf of improving our school.

To ensure that advisory committee members are routinely informed of the results of their recommendations, some schools follow this pattern:

Step 1: *Minutes of the meeting are sent to all instructional personnel and appropriate administrators, and to the school committee when requested.*

Step 2: *School personnel and the school committee decide the action to be taken on the advisory committee's recommendation.*

Step 3: *When the action is decided, all advisory committee members are informed immediately, in writing (by the superintendent-director/vocational-technical director or the school committee), that:*

- *the suggestion was implemented as originated; or*
- *the suggestion was implemented with modification; or*
- *the suggestion was declined with explanation.*

Step 4: *At the next advisory committee meeting, the action is again reported for further discussion as appropriate.*

(Adapted from *Local Advisory Committee: Handbook for Vocational Administrators,* Alaska Department of Education, Juneau, p. 9)

Whatever technique you select, the importance of recognizing the committees' accomplishments cannot be understated. Even if recommendations are not acted upon, it is helpful to explain the reasons. Advisors need to know that school personnel and school committee members are, at least, listening, and that their suggestions are taken seriously.

On the following pages are sample agendas, minutes, recommendations, and a feedback report, demonstrating the communication flow from the program advisory committee to the general advisory committee to the school committee, and back again to the general and program advisory committees.

AGENDA
Graphic Arts Program Advisory Committee Meeting

I. Review shop facilities and equipment
II. Review course of study
III. Student enrollment
IV. New trends in the occupational area
V. Employment outlook
VI. New business
VII. Recommendations

MINUTES
Graphic Arts Program Advisory Committee Meeting

Attendance (names and school or industry affiliation):

_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____

I. Review shop facilities and equipment

Equipment needs updating to reflect emphasis on computer typesetting. More stations are needed.

II. Review course of study

With more computer-typesetting stations, the learning process would move more efficiently. Now students must learn one at a time.

III. Student enrollment

The program has seen 30 percent increase in enrollment over the past three years. Industry wants more graduates. With more stations, we could boost public relations to attract more students.

IV. New trends in the occupational area

Computerized typesetting and offset lithography continue to dominate the industry. Desktop publishing is gaining popularity.

V. Employment outlook. Excellent.

VI. New business

May wish to begin exploring training programs for desktop publishing.

VII. Recommendations

Invite one or more representatives of computer companies to join this committee to advise on trends in desktop puplishing.

Seek donations and funds to expand computer-typesetting stations.

Invite industry representatives to speak to exploratory students about opportunities in graphic arts.

AGENDA
General Advisory Committee Meeting

I. Welcome and introductions (by superintendent-director/vocational-technical director)

II. Dinner

III. Program advisory committee presentations (list individual vocational-technical programs)

_____

_____

_____

_____

IV. Summary (by general advisory committee chairperson)

A. Present status of the school

B. Observed trends

C. Recommendations

MINUTES
General Advisory Committee Meeting

Attendance (list names and affiliations, i.e., with the school, program advisory committee, school committee, or other or attach list):

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

I. Program advisory committee presentations

H.V.A.C.	This program needs more space, more equipment, and a third teacher. As industry uses more computers and solid-state equipment, we should keep up with those trends in our teaching. Taxpayers need to become educated as to the value and purpose of training in this occupational area.
Packaging	Most of our equipment is donated and old, but still good for the principles being taught. Some new equipment is needed, specifically computers, bottling equipment, and both liquid and dry fill machines. We need a larger and more involved advisory committee. Public relations could be improved.
Graphic Arts	This program is all offset lithography; very little letterpress is being used in the area at this time. The equipment, especially for computer typesetting, needs more updating. They have one station and need several more. The advisory committee should be enlarged to help explore trends in desktop publishing.
Machine Shop	Few students are choosing this program. We need better information about it. Success stories are needed for good public relations.
Automotive	There has been great improvement in the use of repair manuals, specifications, and visual and audio aids. The computer equipment needs immediate attention, i.e., we need extra equipment and updated training.

II. Summary of the general advisory committee chairperson

A. Present status of the school
- Increased enrollment overall
- Potential problems in Machine Shop program
- Success in obtaining equipment and supplies; remaining needs

B. Observed trends
- Negative perceptions among students and community of H.V.A.C. and Machine Shop programs
- Advent of computers in nearly all occupational areas
- Continuing demand for vocational-technical students

C. Recommendations
- Purchase new equipment for the Packaging and Automotive programs
- Enlarge program advisory committee membership to reflect the need for computer expertise
- Organize public relations efforts for vocational-technical education generally, and Packaging and Machine Shop programs specifically

REPORT OF THE GENERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

1. Equipment

The General Advisory Committee recommends that the following equipment be purchased:

- *bottling equipment and liquid and dry fill machines for Packaging*
- *computer diagnostic equipment for Automotive*

2. Program advisory committee membership

The General Advisory Committee requests that the School Committee assist in identifying representatives of the computer industry to recruit for membership in appropriate program advisory committees. Advisors are needed to advise on trends in computer use in these occupational areas.

The General Advisory Committee suggests establishing a separate program advisory committee for computer applications in vocational-technical areas. This would give school administration a broader perspective on future needs and perhaps help to consolidate future equipment purchases to serve multiple program areas.

3. Public relations

The General Advisory Committee recommends developing a speakers bureau of industry representatives for the purpose of improving community and student perceptions of vocational-technical education. A few program areas are experiencing declining enrollment despite continued industry demand for graduates.

Also, the General Advisory Committee recommends producing a slide/film presentation depicting vocational-technical students in school and in the industry. We estimate that a 20-minute slide/film show could be produced for $17,000.

Both the speakers bureau and the slide/film presentation would be available for assemblies of exploratory students and for community functions.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GENERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

1. Equipment

The following purchases are authorized from present funds:

Computer diagnostic equipment for Automotive

2. Program advisory committee membership

Individual School Committee members will be pleased to offer recommendations of persons knowledgeable about the computer industry for recruitment to appropriate program advisory committees.

The School Committee has voted to postpone creation of a new, computer industry program advisory committee, pending the outcome of recruitment efforts in this area. At this time it seems that such individuals would be more effective as advisors to particular vocational-technical programs.

3. Public Relations

A total of $17,000 is authorized for development of a slide or film presentation to assist in recruitment of new vocational-technical students and in general community public relations.

cc: Superintendent-director/vocational-technical director

Evaluating Committee Effectiveness

Is your school in compliance with Chapter 74 Regulations governing vocational-technical advisory committees? Does your school gain maximum benefit from its advisory committees? Are there ways to enhance the use of advisory committees? One way to answer these questions is to conduct periodic evaluations.

Assessment of an advisory committee's effectiveness can be performed by committee members themselves, by school personnel responsible for working with or coordinating the work of advisory committees, or by an outside evaluator. This last option will probably be costly and therefore rarely considered, although the results may be more thorough and impartial than the results of a study conducted by an "insider" to the process.

A committee can be effective only if it understands what its objectives are in order to set realistic goals. This requires the effort of a sufficient membership under a strong leadership.

This chapter offers some guidelines for evaluating the effectiveness of advisory committees, whether by surveying committee members or by asking school personnel to complete a self-evaluation. It concludes with some suggestions for remedying common problems in managing vocational-technical advisory committees.

evaluation by advisory committee members

Asking advisory committee members to comment upon their roles is the technique used by the Massachusetts Department of Education, Division of Occupational Education, in its survey of program and general advisory committee members. Schools may wish to consider adopting that instrument (or perhaps an abbreviated version) to survey their own advisors. The survey instrument is in the appendix of this manual.

For best results, surveys should be distributed to all persons listed as advisory committee members, regardless of their level of activity. Inactive members may have important reasons for their lack of participation, some of which may relate to their perceptions of the committee's effectiveness. Survey instruments should be mailed to advisory committee members sometime around the date of their spring meeting, with instructions to return completed surveys to the school administrator by a certain date before the end of the school year.

The Department of Education applied sophisticated statistical techniques to analyze the results of its survey. At the individual school level, such analyses are probably unnecessary. Rather, administrators could simply review completed surveys to identify recurrent problems or areas needing improvement.

evaluation by school personnel

Teachers or other school personnel who are assigned to coordinate and supervise the operation of vocational-technical advisory committees might also be asked to evaluate the committees' effectiveness. Because this method amounts to a self-evaluation, a simple checklist of key indicators should suffice to reveal problems or weaknesses.

Exhibit 23 offers a sample self-administered checklist for assessing the effectiveness of vocational-technical advisory committees. Those school personnel who work most closely with the committees should complete the checklist near the end of the school year, so that administrators can review them and institute corrective actions, if necessary, before school starts again in the fall.

EXHIBIT 23

SELF-ADMINISTERED CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATING VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES

DIRECTIONS: Mark each question in relation to the operation of the advisory committee serving your vocational-technical program.

	YES	NO
1. Is provision made for the permanence and continuity of the committee?	_____	_____
2. Has the school committee developed policies relative to:		
a. advisory committee functions?	_____	_____
b. number of committee members?	_____	_____
c. method by which members are chosen?	_____	_____
d. method of replacing members when their terms expire or when vacancies occur?	_____	_____
e. procedures for communicating with school personnel and school committee members?	_____	_____
f. relationships of the advisory committee to school committee members, administrators, teachers, students, and the community?	_____	_____
3. Are members of the advisory committee nominated by both the school staff and present committee members?	_____	_____
4. Does the school committee make the appointment of individuals to the advisory committee?	_____	_____
5. Are members selected because of their:		
a. interest?		
b. knowledge?	_____	_____
c. ability?	_____	_____
d. willingness to serve?	_____	_____
e. "segment of interest group" representation?	_____	_____
6. Are members notified of their appointment by:	_____	_____
a. letter?	_____	_____
b. personal visit by a school representative?	_____	_____
7. Are committee members appointed for a definite length of time?	_____	_____
8. Is the chairperson elected from the ranks of the committee?	_____	_____
9. Is the school represented by ex officio members?	_____	_____
10. Are members aware of the specific purposes for which the advisory committee is formed?	_____	_____
11. Are committee members informed well in advance of meeting dates and places?	_____	_____

	YES	NO
12. Are committee meetings held only when sufficient need exists?		
13. Is publicity provided for committee activities?		
14. Are formal committee recommendations set forth in writing?		
15. Are committee recommendations channeled through appropriate school authorities?		
16. Does the advisory committee accept the philosophy that its duty is to recommend, not to administer?		
17. Does committee membership include representatives of appropriate business, industry, or occupations in the community?		
18. Are students and parents represented in committee membership?		
19. Is there a feeling of need for the advisory committee by:		
a. school committee members?		
b. administrators?		
c. school staff/personnel?		
20. As related specifically to the evaluation of vocational-technical education, does the advisory committee:		
a. make suggestions concerning the objectives of the school program of vocational-technical education?		
b. advise on curriculum and materials development?		
c. make suggestions regarding the extent to which occupational skills and attitudes should be taught in the school?		
d. help develop instruments and procedures for tracking students' progress?		
e. help conduct surveys of former students, parents, and/or employers?		
f. help acquaint the community with the needs of vocational-technical education?		
g. provide evaluative feedback to the school committee, administration, employers, and other citizens?		
h. help assemble and analyze materials relative to program evaluation?		

DIRECTIONS: Answer the remaining questions, using the following key:

S = satisfactory progress in this area
P = only partial success in this area
N = not satisfied with progress in this area

	S	P	N
21. Do committee members possess a working knowledge of the philosophy and objectives of vocational-technical education?			
22. Is an information program provided that will keep committee members abreast of new developments in vocational-technical education?			
23. Is the committee formally organized?			
24. Does the facilitator perceive his or her duty largely as that of requesting rather than giving advice?			
25. Do school personnel work with the advisory committee when the committee is concerned with a specific portion of the school curriculum for which a school staff member is responsible?			
26. Are committee members invited to school functions?			
27. Are committee members considered part of the "school family"?			
28. Does the committee study and debate the issues before making final recommendations?			
29. Can the committee request that research be conducted by school personnel?			
30. Does the school provide adequate research services for the advisory committee?			

Adapted from *Handbook for Local Vocational Education Advisory Councils*, Nebraska Advisory Councils for Vocational Education, Lincoln, Nebraska, undated, pp. 11-13.

correcting common problems

Some of the problems faced by vocational-technical advisory committees have to do with their composition and schedule of meetings, that is, in complying with the logistical requirements of Chapter 74. Preceding chapters of this manual have offered a number of suggestions for addressing those kinds of problems and by focusing a certain level of attention and resources to organizing and maintaining advisory committees, vocational-technical administrators should soon be able to resolve any logistical difficulties.

But there may be other problems that are more difficult to resolve, especially those arising from misunderstandings or misconceptions of the committees' prupose and role in the context of education. These problems can also be addressed, albeit in a more subtle fashion, to improve the "image" of advisory committees in the school environment.

The advisory committee has been particularly effective in determining what the program needs to make the students valuable to the high-tech industry. Suggestions were adopted in the type of curriculum, books, and equipment used by the school.

Exhibit 24 lists several problems that are common to advisory committees and suggests some simple remedial strategies. These suggestions have the following general objectives:

- assuring broad representation and diversity in the committee;
- encouraging full participation;
- emphasizing the positive, and approaching weaknesses in a constructive way;
- relying on fact rather than rumor or emotion;
- thoroughly preparing for committee meetings; and
- documenting all actions taken or decisions reached.

In other words, advisory committee meetings are not unlike other business-oriented meetings: They must be conducted with a purpose and in a serious manner if the resulting recommendations are to be taken seriously.

EXHIBIT 24

COMMON PROBLEMS AND HOW TO RESOLVE THEM

PROBLEM	SUGGESTED REMEDIAL STRATEGY
The advisory committee is perceived as a "rubber stamp" committee; certain groups within the employment community are not represented on the committee.	Include members with diverse opinions, then set common goals. Disagreement can be constructive as long as all parties work toward common goals.
Information generated is not directly relevant to the actual or desired outcomes of the vocational program.	Make certain that the members represent specific target occupations - as employees, supervisors, and employers.
A "We-they" attitude exists between educational officials and the advisory committee.	Continually seek the cooperation of school officials and instructors; share ideas and information on a regular basis.
The advisory committee is perceived as an adversary of the instructor, administration, or the vocational program.	Do not focus on fault finding; rather, seek out areas in which the program can be commended as well as improved.
The committee's recommendations are unrealistic, reflecting decisions drawn from partial or biased information.	Seek all available and useful sources of information by performing committee studies, using consultants, interviewing knowledgeable people, and using statistical information.
There is a perception that the committee is not objective or systematic in carrying out its work plan.	Base activities and recommendations on factual, carefully collected and complete information, coupled with sound logic.
There is no action taken on, or discussion of the advisory committee's recommendations on the part of the school committee, school administration, or instructors.	Develop an effective strategy for presenting and justifying recommendations. Ask for written responses to the committee's recommendations.
There is ill will among a mis- or uninformed committee membership.	Notify members by phone and letter of date, time, and location of upcoming meetings and activities. Provide all necessary background information for the committee's discussion topics.
Advisors are frustrated by unfocused activity and wasted time.	Respect members' time in all matters. Distribute work equitably. Hold meetings only when needed. Develop, distribute, and follow an agenda and time schedule.
Advisors are confused over procedures when dealing with problems or contingencies.	Clearly define the operational procedures in the committee's bylaws.
Advisors are confused over the purpose, priorities, and plans for committee work activity.	Involve the entire committee in clearly defining the year's work plan. Circulate the plan as a written document.
Advisors are confused or resentful about being rushed into a study or position too quickly or without enough structure or information.	Organize information and activities early to avoid wasting time later.
Too few committee members do the majority of the work.	Provide time for leaders to emerge within the group. This applies to both tasks and overall group activities. Use subcommittees and assign tasks evenly.
There is a loss of interest or resentment among committee members.	Constantly seek to involve each member. Capitalize on members' specific knowledge, experience, commitment, and enthusiasm. Establish a supportive discussion environment. Recognize and reward members for their efforts.
Committee officers appear to lack appropriate skills.	Have the chairperson learn and use management techniques. Anticipate potential problem areas and devise contingencies to deal with them in advance.
Meetings appear to be poorly managed.	Arrange site and meeting logistics for the entire school year well in advance.
Recommendations are idealistic and unrealistic, creating frustration and loss of the committee' credibility.	Offer realistic problem- and resource-based recommendations. Tie recommendations explicitly to proposed outcomes. Address only those subjects provided for in the committee's charter.
There is misunderstanding or resentment among committee members, caused by lack of communication.	Regularly and routinely circulate committee minutes, information, ideas, and recommendations to educators and committee members.

Adapted from *Vocational Instructional Program Advisory Committee, Resource Guide*, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Washington, D.C., Fall 1984, pp. 4-4 - 4-7

Appendix

School ID# _____

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Department of Education

VOCATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE SURVEY

You have been identified by one of the secondary schools in Massachusetts as a current or former member of a vocational advisory committee.

Are you now serving OR have you in the past served as a member of a vocational advisory committee for a secondary school in Massachusetts? (Please check one.)

( ) Yes. If so, please complete the rest of this survey.

( ) No/Don't know. If so, please DO NOT complete the rest of this survey, but DO return the survey in the envelope provided.

The main purpose of this survey is to find out about the types of activities in which vocational advisory committees in the Commonwealth participate. Although you are not required to respond to this survey, your cooperation is needed to ensure that the results are comprehensive, reliable, and timely. Your answers are confidential and results will not be reported in any way that can identify you.

Even if you are no longer an advisory committee member, please complete the survey, basing your responses on how the committee operated at the time you left.

SECTION A: This section contains items about the type of advisory committee on which you serve(d) and how long you have been (were) a member.

1. Are you currently a member of a vocational advisory committee?

   ( ) No ( ) Yes

2. Type(s) of advisory committee of which you are (were) a member. (Please check all that apply.)

   ( ) General Advisory Committee

   ( ) Program Advisory Committee; Give name of program area (for example, "Automotive," "Carpentry")

NOTE: If you are a member of both types of committees, base all your responses on your experience as a member of the General Advisory Committee.

3. Group you primarily represent(ed) on this committee. (Please check one.)

( ) local business and industry
( ) organized labor
( ) parents
( ) students
( ) school
( ) community at large
( ) other (please describe) _____

4. Length of time you have been (were) a member of this committee. (Please check one.)

( ) 1 year or less ( ) 1-2 years ( ) 2-3 years ( ) 3 or more years

5. Do you currently serve as a member of a Private Industry Council (PIC)?

( ) No ( ) Yes

SECTION B: The items in this section deal with the structure, organization, and administration of the advisory committee.

1. The number of members on this advisory committee is (was):

( ) too few ( ) about right ( ) too many

Comment: _____

2. The committee includes a balanced representation of members from different geographic areas, business and industry, organized labor, parents and student, different ethnic groups, and both sexes.

( ) not at all ( ) somewhat ( ) definitely

3. Most committee members seem to be competent, interested, and committed to the committee's activities and tasks.

( ) not at all ( ) somewhat ( ) definitely

4. The duties and responsibilities of committee members, procedural rules, policy statements, etc. are documented in a handbook or written bylaws.

( ) no ( ) yes ( ) don't know/not sure

Comment: _____

5. How many times did this advisory committee formally meet during the past year? (Please check one.)

( ) never ( ) 1-2 times ( ) 3-4 times ( ) 5 or more times

6. How many times did you informally consult with the school about vocational program issues? (Please check one.)

( ) never ( ) 1-2 times ( ) 3-4 times ( ) 5 or more times

7. The advisory committee meetings:

	Never	Sometimes	Usually
a. are scheduled at convenient times and locations	( )	( )	( )
b. include a well-defined agenda	( )	( )	( )
c. are well-organized and smoothly run	( )	( )	( )
d. are attended by most members	( )	( )	( )
e. are productive	( )	( )	( )
f. lead to written minutes or some formal record of what happened in the meeting	( )	( )	( )
g. make good use of committee members' expertise	( )	( )	( )

8. The committee's relationship with the school:

	Never	Sometimes	Usually
a. committee members are invited to school functions	( )	( )	( )
b. school administrators are receptive and responsive to the committee's suggestions	( )	( )	( )
c. school provides written responses to committee's suggestions	( )	( )	( )
d. school acts on committee's suggestions in a timely manner	( )	( )	( )
e. school acknowledges and shows appreciation for committee's contributions	( )	( )	( )

SECTION C: This section contains a list of activities in which vocational advisory committees might participate. For each activity listed, please indicate two things: (1) your opinion about the EXTENSIVENESS of the committee's involvement in that activity, and (2) whether you believe MORE committee involvement is NEEDED.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITY	EXTENSIVENESS of Committee's Involvement				MORE Committee Involvement NEEDED?	
	None	Little	Moderate	A Lot	Yes	No
1. GENERAL PROGRAM PLANNING						
a. Help establish or revise school's philosophy of vocational education	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
b. Help prepare applications for state and/or federal funds for programs	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
c. Help develop recommendations for budgetary expenditures	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
d. Advise school on community or local job market trends	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION ADVISEMENT						
a. Help develop educational objectives	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
b. Advise on technical content of course materials	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
c. Share expertise on new and developing areas	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
d. Review and evaluate course materials	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
e. Advise on methods of instruction most appropriate for course content	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

COMMITTEE ACTIVITY	EXTENSIVENESS of Committee's Involvement				MORE Committee Involvement NEEDED?	
	None	Little	Moderate	A Lot	Yes	No
f. Help school identify courses needed to meet entry-level job requirements	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
g. Advise on extent to which work attitudes should be taught	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
h. Advise on extent to which basic skills (reading, math, etc.) should be taught	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
i. Serve as/arrange for guest instructors or speakers	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3. EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES ADVISEMENT						
a. Review equipment, facilities, and resources	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
b. Recommend new equipment for programs	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
c. Help secure equipment donations and/or outside funding for program support	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
d. Help obtain instructional supplies	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
e. Help maintain current library of visual aids, magazines, and books	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

COMMITTEE ACTIVITY	EXTENSIVENESS of Committee's Involvement: None	Little	Moderate	A Lot	MORE Committee Involvement NEEDED? Yes	No
4. STUDENT RECRUITMENT, CAREER GUIDANCE AND PLACEMENT SERVICES						
a. Recruit students, especially those interested in non-traditional programs for their sex, who have special needs, or who are academically disadvantaged	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
b. Arrange for plant visits and other occupationally related field trips/activites	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
c. Identify potential sites for cooperative or other types of work experience	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
d. Inform employers of availability of trained students	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
e. Inform school's placement staff of job opportunities for students	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
f. Support student vocational organizations (such as VICA, DECA, FFA) via competitions, contests, etc.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
g. Review school's career guidance policies and activities	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
5. PROFESSIONAL (STAFF) DEVELOPMENT						
a. Obtain memberships for instructors in industry and professional organizations	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

COMMITTEE ACTIVITY	EXTENSIVENESS of Committee's Involvement				MORE Committee Involvement NEEDED?	
	None	Little	Moderate	A Lot	Yes	No
b. Secure funding for instructors to attend professional and industrial meetings, seminars, workshops	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
c. Provide work experience opportunities for upgrading instructors' technical skills	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
d. Sponsor or participate in workshops and in-service activities for instructors	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
6. COMMUNITY PUBLIC RELATIONS						
a. Help acquaint the community with the needs of vocational education	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
b. Serve as speakers about cooperation among business, industry, labor, and education	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
c. Explain vocational program operation/goals to both industry and the community	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
d. Provide news releases to industrial magazines and newsletters to the public	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
e. Seek legislative support for vocational programs	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
7. PROGRAM EVALUATION						
a. On a regular basis, help school staff evaluate the quality of vocational programs	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

COMMITTEE ACTIVITY	EXTENSIVENESS of Committee's Involvement				MORE Committee Involvement NEEDED?	
	None	Little	Moderate	A Lot	Yes	No
b. Assist with student follow-up and employer satisfaction surveys	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
c. Review written results of follow-up studies or program evaluations and suggest program changes	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
d. Serve as on-site evaluators for Chapter 74 evaluations conducted by the Department of Education	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )